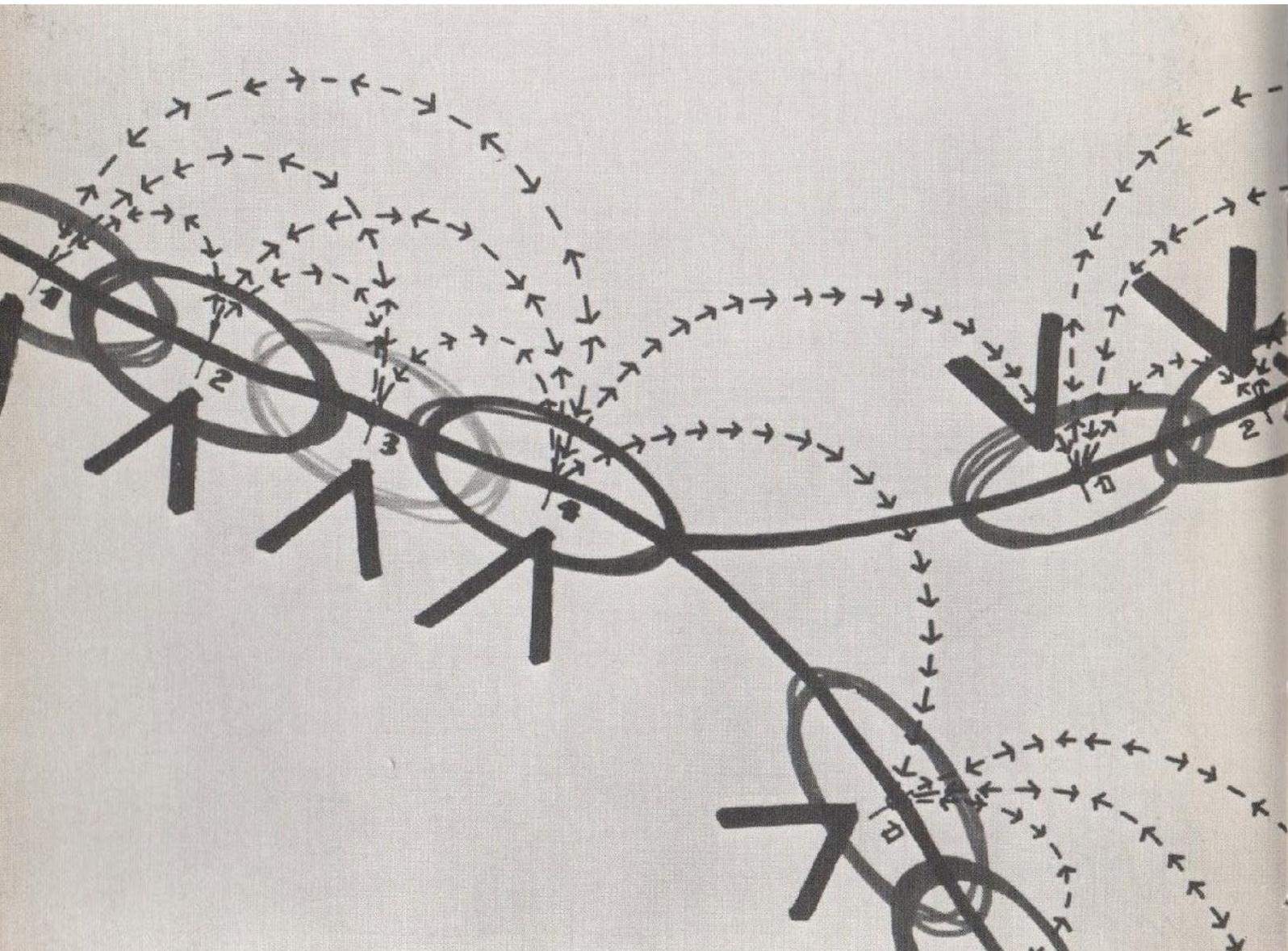


The Realistic Utopia.
Maintaining Criticality in Architectural Practices of
Participation.



The Realistic Utopia
Maintaining Criticality in Architectural Practices of Participation

A Thesis Submitted to the University of Sydney in Fulfilment of Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Architecture, Design and Planning
University of Sydney

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Sydney 2021

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Hugo Moline

September 18, 2021

Abstract.

Recent discourses on participatory architectural practices have argued that despite their claims of a transformative agenda, these practices are typically coopted by power, utilised to manipulate and placate opposition, and prevent rather than enable progressive change. Elsewhere so-called critical practices of architecture have been judged equally ineffective at creating substantive change, unable to engage in the world as it is and instead retreating into abstract, speculative and utopian projects. Placing the discourses together it would appear that while participatory forms of architecture have difficulty maintaining criticality towards the relational power structures through which they operate, critical forms of architecture have somewhat reciprocal limitations participating in reality.

To seek a possible means to navigate the apparent divergence between participation and criticality in architecture this thesis returns to a notion developed by one of the leading early exponents of participation. In 1971 the Italian architect, urbanist, writer and educator, Giancarlo De Carlo gave a lecture in Melbourne entitled *An Architecture of Participation* in which he introduced the concept of the 'realistic Utopia'. Through the course of the thesis a layered definition of the realistic utopia is developed. This is done first through a close reading of De Carlo's principle theoretical works on participation and by mapping the evolution and transformation of the core ideas through his work and the influential contexts in which he was operating. The changes in social, economic and political contexts which have occurred since De Carlo used the term are outlined, with reference to the accompanying discourses on participation and criticality in architecture, to examine the continued relevance and required amendments to the realistic utopia as a conceptual tool for contemporary practices.

The thesis argues that the realistic utopia draws together a number of overlooked aspects of De Carlo's architectural theorisation which explicitly sought a means for architecture to operate critically. The realistic utopia is understood as a means to stimulate social change through the practice of architecture, albeit indirectly, through an iterative and reticulating process of producing images of spatial alternatives in a dialectic relationship with its 'public'. The thesis argues that the realistic utopia offers a distinct conception of the interaction between architectural objects, the processes by which they are formed and the societal structures which frame this formation. It shows that beyond being a means to understand the multi-directional relationship between architecture and society, the realistic utopia offers a conceptual tool to aid action within the complex set of forces at work in this relationship. In this way, it locates the realistic utopia as something of importance beyond an assessment of the work of De Carlo, or even the broader project of participation he fostered, and is here opened up for renewed use by practitioners today.

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Cover Image: Detail from unannotated illustration. Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1972), 34.

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Introduction: The Limits of Participation

A former public works depot in Sydney, now a field of concrete ringed by cyclone fencing. Across the road, in the offices of an arts organisation, we meet with people who live around the field or have some connection to it. The field will soon be gone, replaced by new apartment buildings in an area once industrial, now the densest residential area in the city. The local government will require the developer to create a new public space here. That's why we are here, being paid to speak to these people and come up with some ideas of what this public space could be. A lot of people view us with suspicion. Our activities are a fig-leaf to overdevelopment. We are the midwives of gentrification. We ask people about this place and discuss how it could be. A lot of people just want the site to remain as it is: an absence, a ruin, a pause. We put all this in our report.

Across town, some red-brick blocks line the harbour. Here we are also being paid to speak to people, this time by a community housing association and this time about making concrete improvements, not just suggestions. The housing association has obtained a small grant to establish a community garden. Some people are interested in gardening, others prefer reading or drinking cups of tea. We design to the budget a set of planter boxes with various seats and tables incorporated. Just across the water a much larger community of public housing has just been emptied out and sold off by the State government. People in these red-brick blocks are uncertain how much time they have left before their homes too are sold.

Closer to the beaches, in a leafy street of terrace-houses, we have another project. This time without anyone to speak to. The project is a proposition in the form of artefacts, built in an art gallery. A huge colonial map covers one wall: taciturn assessments of agricultural viability replaced by hyperbolic real-estate tag-lines. It is a map for a fictional movement, one where the legal fiction of Terra Nullius has been made permanent - you own what you occupy, and only as long as you occupy it. We have designed a flexible housing typology for this movement, built at 1:1 scale. The exhibition lasts a few months, is packed away, and stored under my parents' house.

These three projects illustrate, in different ways, a central problem within my own practice regarding the limits of what can be called participatory architecture. For almost 20 years I have been pursuing works of architecture, art and research which collectively fall under this category. The projects undertaken by myself and my collaborators have sought to question who is able to participate in the making of the city and why others are not included. Over this period, questions have begun to emerge regarding the efficacy of our practice. Colleagues have raised questions about the actual effects of our involvement in the projects we work through, such as the development of a new public space as part of a major redevelopment in a rapidly gentrifying area. Our participatory process has been perceived as a tactic to dissipate opposition, employed by those profiting from the transformation of a former working class and public housing area. At the same time, we would be undertaking much smaller projects for specific

communities of public housing residents. In this context, the budgets and timeframes and scope of works were so limited that asking questions of the broader housing system appeared to be a fruitless exercise. We began to question our own work: What good were planter beds to people who may lose their home in a few years? What good is collaboratively designed public space if it contributes to the ongoing displacement of existing communities?

There was an increasing sense in which our efforts were futile, or even counterproductive. Yet the alternative, to simply say no, to stop participating, did not seem to resolve the issues. Someone else would simply take our place and the process would roll on. Perhaps in response to the limitations to ask critical questions within a practice of participation, we began to work on entirely speculative projects that looked at the question of participation on a larger, systemic scale. While these projects were featured within a gallery context, at times constructed as 1:1 artefacts, they remained as speculations, unable to reach beyond the limits of the gallery walls, or preach beyond the choir of audience who cared to visit. They operated on the level of a sign, communicating a possibility rather than enacting it. The ‘participatory’ projects in which we were engaged were able to enact some level of real change, but only within a restricted and largely pre-determined frame.¹ The ‘speculative’ projects were unlimited in the frame of reference that they explored, but were unable to affect anything in the real world. The strength of each seemed to be the weakness of the other. Through these experiences, two interconnected questions began to form: How could a practice of architecture concerned with issues of participation maintain criticality towards the system in which it operated? How could speculative practices which foregrounded their critical relationship towards systems of power operate with any efficacy in the real world?

These questions, which had begun to cause discomfort in my own practice, exemplify a much wider questioning of participatory practices within the discipline of architecture. For more than 50 years, the idea of ‘participation’ in architectural practice has been a potent concept for architects looking to reshape their profession’s social significance.² The notion that the people who use the built environment should be more involved in the crucial decisions regarding its form and the process by which it takes shape has been taken as simultaneously obvious and revolutionary. The widely differing modes of practice which

¹ There has been substantial recent literature concerned with rethinking and reclaiming modes of architectural practice as forms of transformative agency. See for example: Rory Hyde, ed., *Future Practice Conversations from the Edge of Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2012); Martha Bohm, Joyce Hwang, and Gabrielle Printz, eds., *Beyond Patronage: Reconsidering Models of Practice* (New York: Actar, 2015); Giovanna Borasi, ed. *The Other Architect. Another Way of Building Architecture*. (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2015); Melanie Dodd, ed., *Spatial Practices. Modes of Action and Engagement with the City*, (London: Taylor & Francis, 2019).

² While it can be argued that the central idea of participation has existed in various forms throughout history, Peter Blundell Jones has proposed 1968 as the moment in which the concept became widely used in its modern form. Peter Blundell Jones, “Sixty-eight and After,” in *Architecture and Participation*, eds. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (Abingdon: Spon Press, 2005), 127-39.

have resulted have been subject to a spectrum of critical reactions from the broader discipline. Its various formulations have been lauded as generating a more emancipatory built environment, but also derided as corroding the discipline's foundational expertise. Recent discourse regarding participation in architectural practices has made clear that a key problem for such practices lies in their relationship to the broader systems of power which frame their projects. Critics such as the Berlin-based architect and writer Markus Miessen have argued that, despite claims of a transformative agenda, these practices are regularly co-opted by power, utilised to placate opposition, and prevent rather than enable progressive change.³

This problem becomes the central question of the present thesis: how could a practice of participatory architecture establish and maintain criticality towards the power structures through which it operates? This question is, of course, not unique to practices of participation within architecture. As such, a parallel line of discourse is worth considering, that of criticality in architecture. Here, so-called critical practices of architecture have been judged equally ineffective at creating substantive change, unable to engage in the world as it is and instead retreating into abstract, speculative and utopian projects.⁴ Placing the discourses together, it would appear that, while participatory forms of architecture have difficulty maintaining criticality towards the relational power structures through which they operate, critical forms of architecture have somewhat reciprocal limitations in regard to participating in reality. The Belgian architectural historian Hilde Heynen has outlined the overlapping problems encountered by both participatory and critical-visionary architecture in achieving genuine efficacy.⁵ She concluded her survey with the provocative claim that "[t]o avoid the traps that have meant the end of the ideals of participation and visionary architecture, a sort of hybridization between the two attitudes ought to take place".⁶

Giancarlo De Carlo and the 'Realistic Utopia'

As a possible means to navigate the central questions of the thesis and explore the potentials of Heynen's proposed hybrid between participation and criticality in architecture, this thesis returns to the notion of the 'realistic Utopia' developed by one of the leading early exponents of participation, the Italian architect,

³ Miessen's critique is expounded over a series of publications. The most extensive; Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation: Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010) is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

⁴ The retreat of architecture into speculative image-making was explored by Tahl Kaminer, *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation: The Reproduction of Post-Fordism in Late-Twentieth-Century Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011). The question of efficacy in architectural practice, with specific relevance to participatory modes, is explored further by Kaminer through his analysis of recent claims to agency for architecture and the political theories on which these claims rely: Tahl Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture. Political Contestation and Agency* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁵ Hilde Heynen, "Intervention in the Relations of Production, or Sublimation of Contradictions? On Commitment Then and Now," in *New Commitment* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2003), 38-47

⁶ Heynen, "Intervention in the Relations of Production," 46.

urbanist, writer and educator, Giancarlo De Carlo (1919-2005). In 1971, De Carlo gave a lecture in Melbourne, published a year later as *An Architecture of Participation*, in which he introduced the concept of the realistic utopia.⁷ Through the course of the thesis I develop a layered definition of the realistic utopia. This is accomplished first through a close reading of De Carlo's principle theoretical works on participation and by mapping the evolution and transformation of the core ideas through his work and the influential contexts in which he was operating. The realistic utopia is then discussed in the context of the ongoing discourses about participation and criticality in architecture in order to outline its specific potential to contribute to both fields.

The central contribution of the thesis is to articulate De Carlo's concept of the realistic utopia in relation to persistent problems of criticality in participatory architecture (problems which span from De Carlo's time to the present day). As a practitioner engaged with these problems, this has been the ultimate aim, to seek out the relevance of De Carlo's notion of the critical potential of participatory architecture to contemporary practice. While De Carlo has been a central figure in discussions of participatory architecture, his contribution has often been reduced to a shorthand for participation in general and his formulation of an explicitly critical practice of architecture has been less explored. In order to understand his conceptual work on the subject, however, it is crucial to acknowledge and understand its complexity by situating it within his broader work and historical context. The thesis argues a more productive understanding of De Carlo's ideas, particularly with regard to the possibility of a critical participatory practice, lies in better understanding of the relationship between De Carlo's theoretical development and his intertwined practice during the 1960s and '70s.

In this regard a secondary contribution will be made – to deeply understand De Carlo's conceptualisation of the critical potential of an architecture of participation as distilled through the notion of the realistic utopia. The idea that De Carlo's formulation was an explicitly critical one is well established and argued by scholars such as Pelin Tan.⁸ The realistic utopia is equally a well-known and widely referenced concept yet has mostly been understood in fairly literal terms as a framing device for

⁷ Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*. (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1972), 25-29. The lecture was the last of a series of three annual lectures initiated in 1969 entitled 'The Architecture of the Seventies', a title which gave the series a speculative intent to anticipate future architectural developments. The previous two were given by J. M. Richards and Peter Blake.: J. M. Richards, *A Critic's View* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1971); Peter Blake, *The New Forces* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1971). De Carlo would later work with the publisher Il Saggiatore to publish Italian translations of the three talks in a single compilation. Giancarlo De Carlo, Peter Blake, J.M Richards, *L'architettura degli anni settanta* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1973).

⁸ Pelin Tan, "Giancarlo De Carlo and Critical Participation," in *Adhocracy/ Adhokrasi*, eds. V.Sacchetti, A.Rajagopal, T.Shafrir (Istanbul: Istanbul Art and Cultural Foundation, 2012), 71-5.

participation.⁹ In thesis I will articulate De Carlo's concept as a more complex and nuanced device for critical practice able to be used as a conceptual tool within participatory practice as well as beyond what is conventionally understood by practices of participation. This will be done by unpacking De Carlo's dense description of the realistic utopia, tracing its emergence in earlier work, and observing its evolution through experiments in practice and subsequent theoretical reformulations. In this way the realistic utopia becomes a single thread drawn through De Carlo's work, providing both a deeper examination of the importance of the realistic utopia to his own work, and a means to enrich and expand our understanding of the concept in order to observe its relevance beyond the figure of De Carlo.

While recent authors, such as Miessen, position their critique of participation and its potential 'critical' reformulation as a novel enterprise, this thesis recognises the deep roots of criticality in the work of early pioneers such as De Carlo. I will draw on some of De Carlo's key writings and projects to track the complex evolution of his own thinking on criticality and participation in architecture, in order to relate it to the multifaceted, ongoing debate on these topics. De Carlo's intellectual and professional journey offers a vehicle for concisely thinking through the contested scope, dynamics and agency of architectural practices that have come to be termed 'participatory'. His notion of the realistic utopia—and its transformations—are explored and extended through the thesis in order to re-articulate the realistic utopia as a useful conceptual tool for architects practising today.

Participation, both as a theoretical concept and as a mode of practice, has come to be strongly associated with De Carlo and understood as one of his defining contributions to the discipline. Many scholars writing on De Carlo have noted an over-simplified understanding of this association has obscured the full scope of his contribution to architectural thought and the specific possibilities of participation within it.¹⁰ De Carlo himself was evidently frustrated by this.¹¹ He expressed reservations about the term almost as soon as he began discussing it, commenting in 1976: "The term "participation" now covers a wide

⁹ See for example Giacomo Polin "Inside and outsider," *Giancarlo De Carlo, Schizzi inedita*, eds. Anna De Carlo and Giacomo Polin (Milan: Fondazione La Triennale di Milano, 2014): 19. Notable exceptions, whose work I build on, include Sara Marini and Camillo Boano, whose contributions are discussed in Chapter 1.

¹⁰ For example: 'recently it seems that Giancarlo De Carlo's contribution to architecture has been distilled into a single idea – *participation*,' Britt Eversole, "Reputations: Giancarlo De Carlo," *Architectural Review* 235 (2014): 110; 'De Carlo was one who supported participation, but the matter is not as simple as that,' Isabella Daidone, "Il Ruolo dell'architettura nei confronti della società. L'attualità di Giancarlo De Carlo," *Esempi di Architettura* 2 (2015): 1; 'His texts on participation have often been the subject of partisan and banal interpretations, with never-ending references being made to his iconic statement that "architecture is too important to be left to the architects";' Ludovico Centis, "The Public of Architecture: Conflict and Consensus," *San Rocco* 12 (2016): 73.

¹¹ As he said in an interview with Benedict Zucchi in 1990: 'As for the issue of participation... every time I heard people talk about it with reference to my work I feel uncomfortable. First of all because I do not like being labelled (I am not a specialist but a generalist, as I believe every architect should be); second, because the idea of participation is loaded with an enormous number of misunderstandings.' Giancarlo De Carlo, "Conversation with Giancarlo De Carlo," interview by Benedict Zucchi, in Benedict Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo* (Oxford: Butterworth, 1992): 168.

variety of meanings and the most suspect of intentions.¹² The ambiguity and misuse of the term continues to this day. While the radical leveling of power relations implied by De Carlo's original descriptions remains a goal for some, 'participation' is employed as a description for a vast array of different practices with widely ranging agendas. Tahl Kaminer and Maroš Krivý provide a concise summary of some of the directions that have been taken in this evolution:

Whereas participatory planning remained important in much of Latin America, in Western Europe it has been integrated into planning policies in diluted forms such as 'public consultation'. In the United States, many of the Community Design Centres established in the late 1960s and early 70s ended up by the late 1980s as low-profile and limited-impact neighbourhood organisations. The realisation of the Non-Plan in the development of free enterprise zones, such as the London Docklands, has been acknowledged by Paul Barker, one of the authors of the original proposal; the lessons learnt at Urbino have been mostly forgotten, overwhelmed by individualist-consumerist forms of participation, such as the 'shopping list' consultation process of the WIMBY project in Hoogvliet, whereas the 'diverse city' has fostered gentrification and mutated into the 'creative city'.¹³

A common thread can be drawn across these diverse lineages, whereby the initially transformative power of participation has been subsequently dispersed and diluted. This has been claimed as a diminution of the architect's role through ineffectual populism, in which the architect's rejection of authority does not necessarily translate to empowerment of the people.¹⁴ More problematic for those who claim to be enacting a participatory architecture as an equitable, emancipatory practice are the observations that it can actively manipulate the users it is intended to liberate, providing token processes which shift nothing of consequence yet provide ethical cover for those extracting value from the commodification of the city.¹⁵ In both cases, the understanding of participation is limited to the narrow relationship between architect and user and a short phase in the design process.

¹² Giancarlo De Carlo, "Altri appunti sulla partecipazione (con riferimento a un settore dell'architettura dove sembrerebbe piu'ovvia)," *Parametro* 52 (1976): 50, as quoted and translated by Mirko Zardini, "Crestomazia decarliana / Decarlian Anthology," *Lotus International* 86 (1995): 107.

¹³ Maroš Krivý and Tahl Kaminer, "Introduction: The Participatory Turn in Urbanism," *Footprint* 7, no.2 (2013): 1.

¹⁴ Gillian Rose, "Athens and Jerusalem: A Tale of Three Cities," *Social & Legal Studies* 3 (1994): 336. Jeremy Till, "Architecture of the Impure Community," in *Occupying Architecture*, ed. Jonathan Hill (New York: Routledge, 1998) 61-75. Both are discussed in Chapter 5

¹⁵ Numerous authors have highlighted these problems. See Fran Tonkiss, "Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City," *City*, 17, no. 3 (2013): 312-324; Pier Vittorio Aureli, "The Theology Of Tabula Rasa: Walter Benjamin and Architecture in the Age of Precarity," *Log* 27 (2013): 111-127. These are discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

A Critical Form of Participation

I will argue that a close reading of De Carlo's work reveals a much broader and more critical concept of participation than what has come to be understood. For De Carlo, participation was a radical means to multiply the possibilities of architecture through a process which never achieved closure and continually opened conflicts. It was an expansive concept, intended to draw in and operate on the full scope of social 'forces' throughout the entire process of each 'architectural event'—from setting basic project parameters to modifications and evaluations of constructed buildings in use. De Carlo tentatively defined participation as "a process that has the aim of giving everyone equal decision-making power. Or: as a series of continuous and interdependent actions that tend to a situation in which everyone shares power in equal measure".¹⁶ His position was that it was yet to occur, functioning for the time being as a utopia, a horizon to constantly strive for. It was an operation which could not be limited to the interaction between architect and user, but was, rather, directed towards a total levelling of the power structure.¹⁷

While I will argue that De Carlo's description of the realistic utopia plays a key role in the structure of *An Architecture of Participation*, it lasts for only four pages and does not reappear in later writings under the same name. Subsequent references to it by others have primarily focused on a broad framing of participation as a utopian enterprise.¹⁸ I will argue that the realistic utopia has value beyond this; as a conceptual frame through which De Carlo's notion of participation can be understood as an explicitly critical practice. Further, I will argue that, in combination with his proximate notion of critical image-making, it can be understood as a tool by means of which speculative practices can be deployed within a practice of participation. In my reading, the realistic utopia of participation was, for De Carlo, a means to stimulate social change through the practice of architecture, albeit indirectly, by providing iterative critical alternatives in a dialectic relationship with its intended public. As such, the key to De Carlo's understanding of the realistic utopia lies in the idea of a counter-image that is capable of both critiquing a present situation and proposing an alternative.

¹⁶ De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 50.

¹⁷ I suppose at this point, that I should try to define the architecture of participation and to give some idea of how it could be practised. This is not an easy thing to do because the architecture of participation does not yet exist. Nor does there exist any authentic form of participation, at least not in those parts of the world we define as "civilized." We have participation, in fact, only when everyone takes part equally in the management of the power structure, or when the power structure no longer exists because everyone is directly and equally involved in the process of decision making.' De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25.

¹⁸ For example, see Giacomo Polin, "Inside an Outsider," in *Giancarlo De Carlo. Schizzi inediti* (Milan: Fondazione La Triennale di Milano, 2014), 19.

If the counter-image of the organization of physical space, without omitting the forces which act in the context and taking into account both their present and potential energies, upsets the image which is derived from the present artificial situation, then that counter image is a realistic Utopia.¹⁹

In other words, it is the close attendance to the relational context of any proposed reformulation of architecture which defines the realistic utopia. I will argue that, as a complex conceptual device described in passages such as this, the realistic utopia is able to connect a number of aspects of De Carlo's thoughts on participation, thereby expanding its scope to critically engage with the full relational context in which architecture is planned, produced and inhabited. The aim of this thesis is to extract the concept of the realistic utopia from the work of De Carlo in order to explore its relevance for the ongoing debates about criticality in participatory architecture and make it available as a useful conceptual tool for architects practising today.²⁰ While Giancarlo De Carlo, as the originator of the concept of the realistic utopia, is a major figure in the discussion, the focus of the research moves beyond an analysis of his own work, seeking instead to make this overlooked concept available for new use and interpretation in contemporary practice.

The Structure of the Thesis

The scope and possibilities of the realistic utopia are developed over the course of six chapters. As outlined above the core contribution of the thesis is to articulate De Carlo's concept of the realistic utopia as a means to navigate the issues of criticality for practices of participation in architecture today. This requires two distinct undertakings which structure the thesis into two parts. The first part, 'The Realistic Utopia of Giancarlo De Carlo,' articulates the concept of the realistic utopia as it developed within the work of De Carlo to understand all its influences, inflections and the contexts through which it was developed, challenged and augmented. Undertaken over chapters 1-4, De Carlo's core notions of a critical practice of participation, here gathered together as the 'realistic utopia' is traced through his primary texts; in the context of his other work, from which it developed; in the broader disciplinary discussions in which it emerged; in his explicitly participatory projects; and in his later writings and dialogues. The second part, 'Critical Participation beyond De Carlo,' comprising chapters 5 and 6, outlines the particular set of problems faced by practices of participation seeking to operate critically today and examines some of the

¹⁹ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25-26.

²⁰ In this regard I build on the work of Camillo Boano who has previously referred to De Carlo's conception of the 'realistic Utopia' as a potential conceptual device for balancing autonomy and participation: "Practicing *Dissensus*. Intersections between Design Research and Critical Urbanism." Conference notes, presented at the DPU's 60th Anniversary Conference: Reimagining Planning in the Urban Global South, 2-4 July 2014. This is discussed further in Chapter 1.

means by which they are seeking to do so. Finally, these parts are brought together in the concluding chapter to examine what De Carlo's questions and formulations of a critical formulation, read through the notion of the realistic utopia, offers, and in what ways it needs to be modified and augmented for the critical practice of participation in architecture today.

In Chapter 1, I argue that De Carlo's original formulations of participation articulate a notion of how architecture could establish and maintain criticality towards the powers which commission, control and fund it. I further argue that his concept of the realistic utopia provides a framework within which this critical approach can be understood and operationalised. While the definition of the realistic utopia is developed throughout the thesis, this first chapter outlines its key components by focussing on the scope and meaning given to it by De Carlo himself at a precise moment in history. The chapter locates and clarifies De Carlo's notion of the realistic utopia within his seminal formulation of participation in architecture through a close reading of the two texts in which he first introduced and developed these concepts: "Il pubblico dell'architettura" and *An Architecture of Participation*.²¹ The reading of each text has a specific purpose within the structure of the chapter. "Il pubblico dell'architettura" is used to unpack De Carlo's broad concept of participation as a critical practice.²² *An Architecture of Participation* introduces the realistic utopia as a stand-alone concept in De Carlo's own descriptions. By drawing this concept together with other proximate notions within the two texts, I argue that the realistic utopia is a distillation of De Carlo's understanding of how architecture can relate critically to society, understood as a complex set of relations and interdependencies. Here the realistic utopia is aligned with De Carlo's closely related concepts of 'feedback', 'counter-images' and 'the formulation of hypotheses' to articulate a process of working iteratively through a series of architectural images produced in a dialectical relationship with future users and inhabitants. The realistic utopia can therefore be understood both as a description of participation as a concept, and as a practice operating within the 'architecture of participation' at the granular level of each architectural image produced.

Chapter 2 contextualises the emergence of the realistic utopia in relation to De Carlo's previous work and the development of his thought on architecture. The concept is historically situated in the broader disciplinary culture and discourse. Contemporary historical accounts by commentators on De Carlo are brought together with writings by De Carlo himself and by some his contemporaries and interlocutors, including; Alison Smithson, Aldo van Eyck, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Aldo Rossi, and Lucius Burckhardt.

²¹ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Il pubblico dell'architettura," *Parametro* 5 (1970): 4-12, 98. De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*. Both texts originated as lectures, in Liège (1969), and Melbourne (1971), respectively, and were subsequently published. While *An Architecture* appears as a verbatim transcript, "Il pubblico" is noted to have been edited and appended.

²² Setting this text as the framework is important both because of its position as a key historical text for participation in architecture and for the greater depth it provides on specific aspects of De Carlo's formulation which are abridged in the second text.

I argue that the roots of the realistic utopia can be observed across the multiple formats in which De Carlo was developing his ideas, including: written work, works of architecture and urban planning, exhibition curation and film making. I propose that the realistic utopia developed from De Carlo's search for an alternative theoretical framework for architecture beyond the limits of modernist orthodoxy and architectural formalism. Of central importance was De Carlo's emerging interest in the relationship between form and process in architecture, such as his description of Urbino's architectural forms, which he saw as capable of a 'Utopian' character because they were able to alter their social context via 'feedback'.²³ The influence of his rivalries in Italian debates on formalism and historicism is explored, as are his encounters with anarchism, CIAM, Team 10, North American university colleagues and his ambivalent relationship with student and other protest movements in the late 1960s.²⁴ I highlight connections and distinctions among the notions of De Carlo's colleagues, such as Smithson's 'Utopia of the present' and Rogers' '*Utopia della realtà*' (Utopia of reality).²⁵ The discussion also considers resonances with van Eyck's notion of 'twinphenomena' and synergies with Burckhardt's writings on participation and utopia. Overall, the chapter assists us to understand the multiple, overlapping anxieties and proposed reformulations of modern architecture, against which De Carlo developed the concept of the realistic utopia.

Chapter 3 articulates the intended operational context for De Carlo's realistic utopia, that of large-scale housing and urban reconstruction projects, by examining two of De Carlo's contemporaneous projects: the Villaggio Matteotti housing project in Terni and the New Centre Urban Plan for Rimini. De Carlo's notion of participation was central to his stated approach in both projects, and he was in the early stages of both when he formulated the notion of the realistic utopia. The projects are traced via previously published, contemporaneous accounts by participants, collaborators, clients and critics, in combination with De Carlo's own accounts and those of his biographers.²⁶ I argue that the two projects can be read as attempts to enact the realistic utopia and, as such, provide a valuable site to consider its possibilities and limitations in practice. I examine the interaction between the architectural images and designs put forward by De Carlo's team and the processes by which these were critiqued, augmented and challenged

²³ Giancarlo De Carlo, *Urbino: la storia di una città e il piano della sua evoluzione urbanistica*, (Padova: Marsilio, 1966), 257.

²⁴ Principle sources for the biographical details during this period include: Francesco Samassa, ed., *Giancarlo De Carlo: Percorsi* (Milan: Il Poligrafo, 2004); Benedict Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo* (Oxford: Butterworth, 1992); John McKean, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Layered Places* (Stuttgart: Axel Menges, 2004); Zardini, "Crestomazia decarliana," *Lotus International* 86 (1995): 94-117.

²⁵ Alison Smithson, "The Aim of Team 10," in *Team 10 Primer*, ed. Alison Smithson (London: Studio Vista, 1968), 3; Ernesto Rogers, "Utopia della realtà," *Casabella continuità*, 259 (1962), 1-2.

²⁶ Particularly useful in this regard is the extended feature on Villaggio Matteotti published in *Casabella* 421 (January 1977) which, importantly, included interviews with stakeholders and quotations from participants alongside articles by De Carlo, the collaborating sociologist Domenico De Masi, and a critical account by Sergio Bracco. "Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti a Terni: un'esperienza di partecipazione" *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 11-35. In the case of Rimini, in order to see beyond De Carlo's own partisan accounts of the project, a first person account by his main collaborator on the project, Sandro Volta is used as a counterpoint: Fabio Tomasetti, interview with Sandro Volta, *Cambiare Rimini, De Carlo e il Piano del Nuovo Centro (1965-1975)*, (Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2012), 275-283.

to find evidence of the realistic utopia's iterative process of critical image making. In the case of Matteotti, a collective housing scheme for the workers of a State-Owned steel company in Terni, I argue that critical images of process, precedents and designs played an important role in confronting the users and financiers of the project, but that any critical rebound in which the architects own images are transformed is more difficult to observe.²⁷ I explore how the proposed iterative process of the realistic utopia was disrupted by the broader political realities of the situation, whereby only the first of an intended four stages was completed.²⁸ In Rimini, the proposals never progressed beyond the status of image. There, speculative proposals to reformulate the systems of land tenure, functional zoning, housing development and transportation were framed as being both developed through participation and intended to stimulate permanent and ongoing participation. Questions as to the authenticity and efficacy of the participatory process are again raised, this time by the popular opposition to the proposals, which eventually resulted in their abandonment. By recounting the experiences of these two projects I elaborate the social and political context of architectural interventions into large scale housing and urban reconstruction projects in the early 1970s.

The projects also reveal the limitations of putting the realistic utopia into practice within this context. The experiences of the two projects show that the schema imagined for critical participation was implemented only in fragmentary ways, due both to external factors that prevented iterative development, and contradictions within De Carlo's own process. While both projects have been cast as 'failures' of the participatory process, I argue that a more nuanced reading is enabled by seeing them as partial implementations of the realistic utopia. Ultimately, I argue that, when viewed as individual iterations of participation, they represent complex combinations of failure and success under particular conditions, able to be critiqued and reformulated into a new 'image' of participation, in line with the proposed process of the realistic utopia.

²⁷ This process can be observed primarily through a series of open exhibitions and debates which became the basic framework for the participatory process. It is in reference to these exhibitions that Sara Marini makes specific note of the 'realistic Utopia' in her introductory essay to the recently republished Italian version of *An Architecture of Participation*: Sara Marini, "Introduzione: Scegliere la parte," in *L'architettura della partecipazione* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015), 14.

²⁸ Despite what could be seen as the abandonment of the project by its initiators, claims have been made, first by Bracco and later by Manfredo Tafuri, that the political elements of the process had important effects beyond the limited architectural outcome. Bracco alludes to this point in regard to the increasingly mature and active political campaigns of the workers following the project. This point is later taken up by Manfredo Tafuri in his assessment of the historical significance of the project: Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, trans. Jessica Irvine (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 121.

Chapter 4 explores the question of why De Carlo appears to move away from his concept of the realistic utopia following these experiments in practice.²⁹ Three further theoretical contributions by De Carlo are introduced to reveal distinct aspects of this apparent withdrawal, and to argue for an alternative interpretation. The first text considered is an article published in 1976, shortly after the termination of the projects at both Terni and Rimini, "Altri appunti sulla partecipazione" (Other notes on participation).³⁰ This article is read to understand how these practical experiments had affected his notion of participation. I argue that, rather than renouncing any part of his earlier formulation of participation, he was attempting to reiterate and expand the concept. In doing so, he outlined how the 'utopia' of participation could be drawn into closer contact with the 'realities' of bureaucracy and construction. The second text, also in 1976, is De Carlo's short speech, and the reactions to it, during a debate amongst participants in the exhibition *America: Europa* held during the Venice Biennale.³¹ I argue that this debate, in which De Carlo's intervention was the central 'polemic' challenged by a range of alternative views, illustrates a very different disciplinary context than that in which the realistic utopia was first formulated, and indicates an emerging split between the ideals of socially engaged architecture and more autonomous forms of speculative practice. The third text is a lecture given in London in 1978 entitled "Reflections on the Present State of Architecture".³² I argue that, while this lecture explicitly rejects speculative drawing practices within architecture, it also shifts the notion of participation towards a more general and holistic approach to architecture as the mobile communication of ideas across generations. In this, a critical impulse for architecture to be 'disentangled from the requirements of power' repeatedly emerges. This, I propose, can be understood as an expansion of the concept of the realistic utopia as a critical, iterative process able to develop not only within a project, but between different projects, practices, locations and times.

²⁹ This question is raised by the 1980 republication of an abridged version of *An Architecture of Participation* in which all reference to the realistic utopia has been omitted. Giancarlo De Carlo, "An architecture of participation," *Perspecta* 17 (1980): 74-79.

³⁰ De Carlo, "Altri appunti sulla partecipazione," 50-53.

³¹ Franco Raggi, ed., "Quale movimento moderno" in *Europa-America: architetture urbane, alternative suburban*, (Venezia: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978), 174-182. My analysis is based on consultation with an original copy of the transcript by Vincenzo-Guiseppe Berti in which the English language contributions were left untranslated. "Europa-America" (Venice, August 1, 1976). Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale. Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies fonds, 1965-1984, Series: Publications, 1966-1984, Sub-series: Periodicals, 1970-1982, Canadian Center for Architecture (CCA), Reference number: ARCH153618.

³² Giancarlo De Carlo, "Reflections on the Present State of Architecture," *The Inaugural Thomas Cubitt Lecture by Professor Giancarlo de Carlo at The Royal Institution, London W1. Monday 22 May 1978*. (London: Thomas Cubitt Trust, 1978).

Chapters 5 and 6 make up the second part of the thesis. Chapter 5 follows the establishment over time of a participatory architecture discourse involving important contributions and critiques beyond those of De Carlo. This discourse is tracked to identify key problems that emerge around the question of criticality in participatory practices. The chapter outlines and contextualises various critiques, observing how each was situated in and responsive to the broader conditions of its time while also attending to the continuities, breaks and developments between these major contributions. Within this discourse, participatory architecture was seen to have failed to achieve its emancipatory intentions by becoming, variously: manipulative, populist, tokenistic, co-opted by power, reformist, absorbed by planning, absorbed by the market, and ethically hidden from judgement.³³ I argue that that, despite their differences, these evaluations share a common claim, that participatory architecture, as it has been practised, lacks the means to critically understand and act upon the social and political situations in which it is engaged. I propose that, while this has been a persistent problem, it poses specific difficulties for those practices seeking to operate critically under the current conditions of largely privatised housing and public space.

Chapter 6 approaches the question of how contemporary practices of architecture concerned with participation could establish and maintain critical relations with the power structures in which they operate. I introduce a set of influential positions and debates on criticality and autonomy, including the work of architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri on the inescapable complicity of architecture in capitalism and more recent Anglo-American discussions on critical and post-critical potentials for architecture. These situate what Hilde Heynen has identified as an artificially restricted choice between modes of ineffective criticality and uncritical performance in architecture in order to introduce some alternative positions that have emerged outside these debates.³⁴ These positions attempt, in different ways, to maintain both autonomy and engagement in practice and are therefore directly relevant to the question of criticality within practices of participatory architecture. Here, I consider recent efforts to

³³ Manipulative: Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (July 1969): 216-224; Populist: Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, "In the Name of the People; The Populist Movement in Architecture," in *What People Want: Populism in Architecture and Design*, ed. Micheal Shamiyeh (Basel: Birkhauser, 2005), 289-305; Tokenistic: Jeremy Till, "The Negotiation of Hope," in *Architecture and Participation*, eds. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (Abingdon: Spon Press, 2005): 23-42; Coopted by power: Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation: Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality*. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010); Reformist: Aureli, "The Theology of Tabula Rasa."; Absorbed by planning: Heynen, "Intervention in the Relations of Production, or Sublimation of Contradictions?"; Absorbed by the market: Isabelle Doucet, *The Practice Turn in Architecture: Brussels after 1968* (London: Routledge, 2016) and Jesko Fezer and Mathias Heyden. "Under Construction: Strategies of Participative Architecture and Spatial Appropriation," trans from the German by Elizabeth Felicella and Ines Schaber in *What Remains of a Building Divided into Equal Parts and Distributed for Reconfiguration*, eds. Ken Ehrlich and Brendon LaBelle (Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2009), 10-27. Ethically hidden from judgement: Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012) and Paul Jones and Kenton Card, "Constructing 'Social Architecture': The Politics of Representing Practice," *Architectural Theory Review* 16, no. 3 (2011): 228-244.

³⁴ Hilde Heynen, "A Critical Position for Architecture," in *Critical Architecture*, eds. Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill, Murray Fraser and Mark Dorrian (London: Routledge, 2007), 48-56. Other key guides on this debate include: George Baird, "Criticality and Its Discontents," *Harvard Design Magazine* 21 (2004): 16-21 and Reinhold Martin, "Critical of What? Toward a Utopian Realism," *Harvard Design Magazine* 22 (2005): 1-5.

reintroduce utopian practices within architecture as critical alternatives to the ‘anti-utopia’ of neoliberalism and the ‘regressive’ utopias of populism.³⁵ I also consider the concept of *Dingpolitik*, drawn from the work of Bruno Latour, as a means to connect more definitively with the relational aspects of architectural production and its products.³⁶ The possibilities for critical practice suggested by these distinct discourses are developed through a discussion of practices and projects associated with the resurgent interest in participation from the early 2000s. Through this analysis, I argue that two key features of the realistic utopia have run parallel to, and often overlapped with, the return of participation in architectural practice: an interest in the critical function of utopian practice and, and a greater acknowledgement of the relational networks surrounding the objects of architecture.

Part One of the thesis provides a close analysis of De Carlo’s writing and praxis through the 1960s and 1970s, as well as key contextual aspects in their development. The thorough discussion of Part One’s four chapters provides an important foundation for a more speculative reconsideration in Part Two of the possibilities for a critical participatory architecture, mapped across two chapters via a select number of practices. The first part is necessarily longer as it is in this part that the full complexity of the notion is defined, unpacked extended and examined. The second part is best understood as an initial sketch of the issues against which the realistic utopia, extensively described through part one, can now be understood in relation to. In both parts careful selection is made to keep the focus on what can be most usefully drawn from the work of De Carlo and reintroduced to the contemporary dilemmas of participatory practice. In the first part I have constrained my research to those aspects which can most directly inform the understanding of the realistic utopia as an articulation of a critical practice of participation. The intention here has been to take existing sources (De Carlo’s own texts, archival transcripts, contemporaneous accounts and interviews) and read them through the realistic utopia. As such the research does not attempt to draw in novel material, rather it uses well established sources to provide a novel reading. In doing it takes an intentionally specific slice of De Carlo’s work which, by necessity, omits significant aspects of his broader work.³⁷

³⁵ Ana Jeinić, "Neoliberalism and the Crisis of the Project... in Architecture and Beyond." in *Is There (Anti-)Neoliberal Architecture?*, ed. Ana Jeinić and Anselm Wagner (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2013), 64-77. Britt Eversole, "Populism and Regressive Utopia, Again and Again," *Project 6* (Spring 2017): 46-59

³⁶ Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: The MIT Press, 2005), 4-21.

³⁷ For example, his later work on ‘reading’ places through his housing project at Mazzorbo, the studies conducted via the International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design (ILAUD), and his editorial work through the journal *Spazio e Società*. While each can be considered to as further incremental developments of some aspects of the realistic utopia, they are not discussed in depth as I consider them to reiterate positions described in depth through reference the 1978 Thomas Cubitt lecture in Chapter 4.

In Part Two the potential material to engage with is even more expansive, there are a greater number of practices and projects open to consideration with a wider chronological and geographical range. As such even more careful selection is required. In mapping key moments of the development of participatory practice in architecture I have limited the investigation to a representative set of practices and theorisations which have been selected for their relevance to the question of criticality within a practice of participation. Similarly when discussing broader disciplinary positions on the possibility of criticality in architectural practice, a set of influential positions have been selected against which the particularities of the realistic utopia can be read. The difficulty of presenting a limited selection for practices becomes acute when introducing and discussing contemporary practices. Here again I have sought to present a indicative sample which succinctly articulate a set of distinct approaches to combining participatory and critical-speculative modes in practice.

Through the thesis I seek to identify a possible means to negotiate the interconnected contemporary dilemmas of uncritical participation and ineffective criticality in practice by excavating Giancarlo De Carlo's concept of the realistic utopia. In this way, I locate the realistic utopia as something of importance beyond an assessment of the work of De Carlo, or even the broader project of participation he fostered, opening it up for renewed use by practices of architecture seeking to actively change the structures of decision making and control which frame the production of the built environment today. Realistic utopian architecture is thereby positioned as a critical alternative to the somewhat stale categories of participatory, community and social architecture, providing a means to problematise and reinvent their operations. Despite this expanded scope, De Carlo's work remains a fundamental reference point around which this thesis develops. By tracing the concept of the realistic utopia through his developing thought and practice, both before and after its explicit formulation, the thesis constructs a complex picture of its frailties and possibilities. His attempts to enact the principles in his own work reveal the challenges of maintaining criticality in practices of participation, while his later reformulation of a critical architecture which persists, despite its failures, enables the concept to more fully address the fundamental questions of the thesis than would be possible if the description from the Melbourne lecture was considered on its own.

I argue that the realistic utopia offers a distinct conception of the interaction between architectural images and objects, the processes by which they are formed and the societal structures which frame this formation. I argue that, beyond being a means to understand the multi-directional relationship between architecture and society, the realistic utopia offers a conceptual tool to aid action within the complex set of forces at work in this relationship. It is in these respects that I propose that the realistic utopia can still be useful for practices of architecture which carry forward the ambition of participation to establish

and maintain critical relationships with broader political, social and financial structures that frame the projects in which they work.

Part 1. The Realistic Utopia of Giancarlo De Carlo.

1. Giancarlo De Carlo and the Realistic Utopia of Participation 1969-1971

This chapter outlines the central argument of the thesis, that De Carlo's concept of the realistic utopia provides a tool for thinking about how practices of participatory architecture could establish and maintain criticality towards the social, political and financial systems that frame their interventions. I will argue that the realistic utopia is an explicit formulation of how to critically examine these broader systems and propose their reformulation as an integral part of a participatory process. The realistic utopia will be positioned as an idea that draws in other elements from De Carlo's original notion of participation and which are crucial to its operation as a tool of propositional critique. Of central importance here are, first, De Carlo's positioning of participation as running throughout the entire process of architecture, from initial decisions regarding budgets, location and program to the dynamics of ongoing use, and second, his specific understanding of the agency of the images, that is, their ability to indirectly stimulate societal change through a process of iterative feedback. While De Carlo's relatively brief outline of the realistic utopia appears to focus on how his notion of participation is itself such an image, this chapter argues that this form of propositional critique can also be understood as a mechanism by which the practice of participatory architecture can maintain criticality through the production of realistically utopian images at every iterative step of the process.

The chapter locates De Carlo's notion of the realistic utopia within his seminal formulation of participation in architecture by focusing on the two texts through which he first introduced and developed these concepts. His 1970 article "Il pubblico dell'architettura" (Architecture's Public) is addressed first.¹ This pivotal text on participatory architecture is re-examined to explore De Carlo's initial proposition for an architecture of participation as primarily a mechanism for criticality. This text provides the conceptual grounding from which an explicit formulation of the realistic utopia was to emerge in the second text, a transcript of a lecture given in Melbourne in 1971 entitled *An Architecture of Participation*.² The two texts are read closely in order to define the realistic utopia in terms of the scope and meaning given to it by De Carlo and to provide the basis for the expansion of the term in subsequent chapters.

¹ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Il pubblico dell'architettura," *Parametro* 5, (1970): 4-12, 98. As noted in De Carlo's introduction, the article was developed from a lecture given the previous year in Liège: Giancarlo De Carlo, "L'architecture est-elle trop important pour être confiée aux architectes," in *L'architecte n'a plus d'audience. Quel est l'avenir du domaine bâti*, ed. Elmar Wertz (Liège: L'association pour le progrès intellectuel et artistique de la wallonie, 1969), 19.

² Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1972).

In his expansive “Crestomazia decarliana” (Decarlian Anthology), the former director of the Canadian Center for Architecture, Mirko Zardini, refers to the term as exemplary of De Carlo’s interest in utopia, without expanding on any particular meaning he may have given it.³ Other writers have primarily engaged with the realistic utopia as a description of his overall formulation of participation, and their treatment is typically cursory.⁴ This is perhaps not surprising, given that De Carlo explicitly uses the term realistic utopia only in the 1971 Melbourne lecture and, while it plays a central role in that text, the description is only four pages long. Indeed, it appears that De Carlo himself was not especially enamoured of the concept, since he excised the relevant text from the abridged version of the lecture republished eight years later.⁵

Two authors, however, provide brief commentaries which align with the interpretation of the realistic utopia that underpins this thesis. Sara Marini, Professor at the Università Iuav di Venezia, singles out the term in the introduction to her edited collection of De Carlo’s essays centred around the around the Melbourne lecture. Marini explicitly connects the term with the use of images in the participatory design process for De Carlo’s 1969-1974 Villaggio Matteotti housing project.⁶ There, Marini draws the connection between De Carlo’s use of the term in the text and the architectural objects and processes on which he was working concurrently. This provides an important precedent for the argument of the present thesis, namely, that the realistic utopia is not just a framing concept for participation but one that operates incrementally through each step of the process and is particularly enacted via the production of images. While Marini uses the term as a means of interpreting De Carlo’s work, the focus in this thesis is on the relevance of the concept to contemporary debates regarding criticality in participatory architecture. In this context, a precedent is provided by Camillo Boano, Professor of Urban Design and Critical Theory at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London, in his paper entitled “Practicing *dissensus*. Intersections between design research and critical urbanism”.⁷ Boano refers to De Carlo’s conception of the realistic utopia as a means to hold ‘autonomy and participation’ together as non-

³ Mirko Zardini, “Crestomazia decarliana / Decarlian Anthology,” *Lotus International* 86, (1995): 116.

⁴ See, for example: ‘the main proponent in Italy, in the wake of ’68 (...) of community planning as a “realistic utopia”’ Giacomo Polin “Inside and outsider,” *Giancarlo De Carlo, Schizzi inedita*, eds. Anna De Carlo and Giacomo Polin (Milan: Fondazione La Triennale di Milano, 2014): 19

⁵ Giancarlo De Carlo, “An Architecture of Participation,” *Perspecta* 17 (1980): 74-79. For the most part, the republication is identical to the original, but several passages have been removed, including the section dealing with the notion of the realistic utopia.. Possible reasons for this lacuna are explored in Chapter 4.

⁶ ‘Nella seconda mostra del 1973 viene esposto il progetto del Villaggio Matteotti alle differenti scale, attraverso diversi materiali per far conoscere ai futuri abitanti, prima di viverla, la traduzione spaziale dei loro desiderata. L’architettura della partecipazione è così raccontata e vissuta come *utopia realistica*.’ Sara Marini, “Introduzione: Scegliere la parte” in *L’architettura della partecipazione*, comp. Sara Marini (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015), 14. This and all subsequent translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated. In a review of Marini’s compiled volume, Chiara Maranzana uses ‘L’utopia realistica’ to describe both De Carlo’s ‘manifesto’ and the projects on which he reflected in the other two texts included in the volume: the Villaggio Matteotti housing project in Terni and the New Centre Urban Plan for Rimini.

⁷ Camillo Boano, “Practicing *dissensus*. Intersections between design research and critical urbanism,” Conference notes, DPU 60th Anniversary Conference: Reimagining Planning in the Urban Global South, 2-4 July 2014. https://www.academia.edu/7927043/Practising_dissensus_Intersections_between_design_research_and_critical_urbanism

exclusive elements of an architectural practice.⁸ In doing so, he begins to draw the concept into other contexts and practices, specifically those dealing with the conditions of the urban global south. While Marini points us towards an interpretation of the realistic utopia as a tool in practice, Boano points us towards considering the use of the realistic utopia beyond the bounds of De Carlo's practice. In the present chapter, I will expand on these perspectives through a close analysis of De Carlo's own texts.

Although, as previously noted, the term realistic utopia is explicitly used only in the Melbourne lecture, the present discussion considers the ideas embedded in it across both this text and "Il pubblico". It considers "Il pubblico" as providing the most comprehensive outline of De Carlo's initial formulation of participation, and treats the Melbourne lecture as an extension. The chapter begins with a close reading of "Il pubblico", first as a critique and then as a proposition. It then introduces the realistic utopia as the primary contribution of the Melbourne lecture and articulates its description in that text. It then traces the key concepts of the realistic utopia back to the ideas presented in "Il pubblico" in order to more fully articulate its scope, meaning and potential by integrating it with other proximate notions within the two texts. In doing so, the chapter argues that the realistic utopia is a distillation of De Carlo's very specific understanding of how architecture can relate critically to society through a process of iterative 'feedback'. The descriptions of the realistic utopia as an 'image' are connected with previous descriptions of 'counter-images' introduced in "Il pubblico" to articulate the use of the term as a device operating within the 'architecture of participation' at the granular level of each architectural image produced. Here, it is linked to De Carlo's closely related concept of the 'formulation of hypotheses', which appears in both texts, understood as a method of working iteratively through a series of architectural images produced in a dialectical relationship with future users and inhabitants. This understanding of the realistic utopia is then extended from architectural image to built object through De Carlo's description of buildings as themselves 'hypotheses' and 'images' which continue the mutually critical dialectic of participation beyond the involvement of the architect. The main purpose of the chapter is, thus, to enrich the meaning of the realistic utopia by connecting it with these closely aligned notions from De Carlo's texts. It is through this enrichment that the realistic utopia can be articulated as a model for practices of participatory architecture to establish and maintain criticality towards the broader systems that frame their interventions.

⁸ Boano "Practicing *dissensus*," 2.

“Il pubblico dell’architettura” Part 1: Participation as Critique

Participation was a theme which De Carlo discussed in writings, lectures and interviews from the late 1960s until the end of his life.⁹ Of his many writings that address the question of participation, the 1970 publication of “Il pubblico dell’architettura” in the Italian journal *Parametro* has come to be seen as his most important by many commentators on De Carlo and those writing more broadly on participation.¹⁰ When Benedict Zucchi published the first English language monograph on the work of De Carlo, the only original text he included in full as an appendix was “Il pubblico”.¹¹ While the original *Parametro* version was paired with an English translation, Zucchi retranslated the work from the Italian and applied the English title, “Architecture’s Public”. The importance of the text extends beyond its significance within De Carlo’s own work and has come to be regarded as the most significant piece of writing to address participation in architecture as it was understood in the 1960s and 70s. When Peter Blundell-Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till sought to critically engage architectural history and theory with a re-emerging interest in participation through their conference (2002) and subsequent publication *Architecture and Participation* (2005), “Architecture’s Public” featured prominently. Retranslated once again, it is the first essay in the book, and the only ‘historic’ piece of writing to be included in the anthology.¹² The text continues to be re-published in various contexts where a theoretical contribution regarding participation is deemed necessary, even when the explicit connection to De Carlo is unclear.¹³ These settings highlight the clear contribution of the work to a theory of participation. In the present thesis, however, the text is primarily used to understand De Carlo’s formulation of architecture’s potential to be critical of the systems that commission, control and fund it.

“Il pubblico” can be seen as comprising two parts. The first is a critique of contemporary architecture which outlines what De Carlo saw as a crisis of credibility facing architecture at the time. The second part proposes participation as a means to resolve the crisis and restore credibility with architecture’s true public: the people who use it. In his critique, De Carlo attributes the loss of credibility to the failure of the modern movement to live up to its promises. He aligns this failure with modernism’s inability to

⁹ Apart from “Il pubblico dell’architettura” and *An Architecture of Participation*, De Carlo contributed a number of other notable lectures and articles which addressed the theme of participation. A selection of those which predate the two texts covered here are discussed in Chapter 2 while those which follow on and develop his ideas are discussed in Chapter 4.

¹⁰ An exception to the hierarchy of texts established here, and by which this chapter is structured, can be found in the recent Italian republications of De Carlo’s writings by Quodlibet. “Il pubblico dell’architettura” is included only as a supporting text to Giancarlo De Carlo, *La piramide rovesciata. Architettura oltre il ‘68*, comp. Filippo De Pieri (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018), whereas *An Architecture of Participation*, in its Italian version, is the primary text in an earlier volume: Giancarlo De Carlo, *L’architettura della partecipazione*, comp. Sara Marini (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015).

¹¹ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Appendix ‘Architecture’s Public’ Giancarlo De Carlo 1970” in Benedict Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, (Oxford: Butterworth, 1992) 204-215.

¹² Giancarlo De Carlo, “Architecture’s Public” in *Architecture and Participation*, ed. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (Abingdon: Spon Press, 2005): 3-22.

¹³ See, for example; Delfim Sardo, ed., *The SAAL Process: Architecture and Participation 1974-1976*, (Serralves: Porto, 2014)

challenge the fundamental relationship of power to architecture, a system that extends far back into its history as a professional activity. It is the critical reframing of this relationship which forms the substance of his proposition for participation in architecture, articulated through the second part of the text.

In the text, the contemporaneous events of 1968 play an important role in catalysing both his critique and his proposition for participation. De Carlo begins with a section titled ‘The Revolt and The Frustration of the School of Architecture’.¹⁴ For De Carlo, who had been involved both as a target and accomplice of the student movement, it was not coincidental that the demand for ‘a radical renewal of organizational structures’ came first in the architecture schools, whose deep conservatism made them targets for radical renewal.¹⁵ While he acknowledges the ‘excellent premises which fed the revolt’, they ultimately failed in their ambition. This failure, for De Carlo, was due to the poverty of ideas not only in the schools of architecture but within the field of architecture more generally: “There was no line of thought or collection of facts coherent enough with reality to be able to constitute the matrix of concrete alternatives for the modification of reality.”¹⁶ For De Carlo, architecture lacked the conceptual tools to allow it to act critically on the reality in which it was operating. This analysis sets the stage for the exercise in which De Carlo is engaged throughout “Il pubblico”: to identify a means by which architecture can act critically in the world, modify ‘reality’, and provide ‘concrete alternatives’ that are explicitly ‘coherent’ with the reality it is seeking to change. These elements find a place in his later description of the realistic utopia.

Having identified the absence of a mechanism by which architecture could act critically within its context, De Carlo goes on to seek its root causes in the next section, titled: ‘The Ambiguity of the Architect’s Role’.¹⁷ Through an analysis of the diverse positions held by architects in history, from ‘head bricklayer’ to ‘high priest’, he identifies a single common factor that is unchanging: the absolute dependence of architects on the power structure through which they operate:

Since money, materials, land and authority to act were necessary and the ruling power was the only force capable of furnishing him with these means, the architect by definition had to identify himself with it and at a certain point transform himself into its operative appendage.¹⁸

¹⁴ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 4.

¹⁵ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 4. His specific involvements, primarily through the writing of ‘La piramide rovesciata’ and his curation of the blockaded XIVth Milan Triennale, are discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁶ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 4.

¹⁷ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 4.

¹⁸ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 5.

In De Carlo's analysis, this dependence naturally resulted in their corresponding inability to question the fundamental motivations and consequences of their work. Only power could furnish the architect with the means to operate. As such, the architect was limited to addressing technical questions of 'how' to best achieve its aims and obliged to ignore any questions of 'why' such a program, such an allocation of resources, should be enacted. From its position as a 'superstructural' activity, an 'operative appendage', architecture was unable to be critical of either the fundamental reasons or the material consequences of its operations. His juxtaposition of 'how' and 'why' underline that he was seeking a way for architecture to be critical, to go beyond proposing solutions to predefined questions and, instead, to critically question the framework of decision making through which it operated.

The architect's inability to be critical was, for De Carlo, closely related to the broader phenomenon of increasing specialisation of professional disciplines, which he connected historically to the industrial revolution.¹⁹ As each profession became increasingly dedicated to and sophisticated in a singular area of expertise, its members simultaneously became more adept at answering questions of 'how' to solve specific technical problems and increasingly clueless in regard to the questions of 'why' they were performing the task allocated to them.²⁰ Despite its subservience, De Carlo notes an attribute of the discipline of architecture which, for him, differentiated it from other such 'operative' professions—its ambiguity of purpose and lack of disciplinary structure. This ambiguity arose from the discipline's background as 'a combination of irreconcilable contrasts', of mutually negating artistic and technical inclinations. For De Carlo, '[t]he academic artistic background was destined to annul the formation of any concrete proposition of application', whereas 'the technical was destined in turn to render commonplace any abstract expressive proposition'.²¹ While thus framing the quality of ambiguity largely in the negative, De Carlo also viewed it as the aspect of architecture which enabled it to resist the kind of total specialisation that had 'subjugated' other professions. This more positive interpretation of ambiguity, of concepts capable of operating in between oppositional terms, becomes important when approaching this same quality in De Carlo's own conceptions, most notably in the realistic utopia itself.²²

In the next section, De Carlo specifically addresses his critique to the modern movement in a section titled: 'The Modern Architectural Movement between Commitment and Uncommitment'.²³ Here he raises the question of who can be truly considered as architecture's 'public': 'the architects themselves, or

¹⁹ De Carlo had developed his critique of specialisation in earlier texts, notably Giancarlo De Carlo, "How/Why to Build School Buildings," *Harvard Educational Review* 4 (1969): 15. This aspect is explored in greater depth in Chapter 2

²⁰ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 5.

²¹ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 5.

²² Connections between the realistic utopia and his Team 10 colleague, the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck's notions of the 'in-between' and 'twinphenomena' are explored in Chapter 2.

²³ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 5.

the clients who commission the buildings, or the people—all the people who use architecture?²⁴ De Carlo, like many of his contemporaries in Europe, had established his career in the design of state-led, large-scale housing projects and had become increasingly involved in large-scale urban planning projects.²⁵ It is to the working class residents of such housing developments and the citizens subjected to these urban reconstructions that De Carlo is referring as architecture's true public.

The repositioning of 'all the people who use architecture' as the ultimate focus of the practice leads De Carlo to question the achievements of the 'Modern Movement'. De Carlo had been a vocal critic of the dogmatism and formalism of orthodox modernism since the early 50s.²⁶ As has been noted already, "Il pubblico" should be read primarily as De Carlo's search for a way in which architecture could act critically in regard to its social and political context. In this section, he locates the strongest possibility for architecture to create a conceptual and operative structure capable of doing so within the modern movement.²⁷ Ultimately, however, he judges that it was not able to realise this potential, despite the occasional efforts of some heroes 'leaning out of their elite positions'.²⁸ He attributes this failure to the way in which this group chose to define the field of reality within which it proposed to operate. This choice precluded the involvement of the most essential elements by delimiting its scope to:

a field restricted to the relations between clients and entrepreneurs, land owners, critics, connoisseurs and architects; a field built on a network of economic and social class interests and held together by the mysterious tension of a cultural and aesthetic class code; a field which excluded everything in economic, social, cultural and aesthetic terms which was not shared by the class in power.²⁹

This description of the restricted field of operations ultimately points to De Carlo's argument for participation as an expansion of the field of concern. The modern movement had chosen irrelevance by identifying the wrong public, resulting in an 'estrangement from reality'. As such, its achievements were sadly limited to enabling 'a few great free spirits projected in a daring search for newness' tied to a

²⁴ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 5.

²⁵ While his first project at Sesto San Giovanni in 1950 was executed along orthodox modernist principles, its 'misuse' by residents initiated a reflection by De Carlo on the validity of modernist principles. This and his subsequent attempts to resolve these conflicts via predominantly formal means (notably in Baveno and Matera) are explored in the first section of Chapter 2. De Carlo was simultaneously engaged through the 1950s and 1960s in a search for alternative means to frame and enact large scale urban planning. These questions, critiques and attempts at reformulation are also discussed in Chapter 2.

²⁶ These positions were articulated through various articles in *Casabella Continuità*, and developed through his interactions with others in Team 10. The formation of De Carlo's particular critique leading to the position taken in 'Il pubblico' is traced in Chapter 2.

²⁷ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 4.

²⁸ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 6.

²⁹ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 6.

corresponding ‘multitude of walk-ons destined to nullify the novelties of the former reducing them to inert symbols, completely commensurate with the requirements of the ruling class’.³⁰ By neglecting their true public, architects had lost all credibility with ordinary people, becoming a caricature framed as ‘the expert exploiter of building areas, the manipulator of building codes, the cultural legitimator of the sack of the city and the territory organised by financiers, politicians and bureaucrats to the detriment of the collectivity’. Here, as elsewhere, De Carlo’s rhetoric—the architect as merely a ‘manipulator’ and ‘legitimator’ for the requirements of the powerful and against the needs of the ‘collectivity’—verges on the simplistic in its positioning of the powerful and the powerless as monolithic blocs.³¹ Regardless of this lack of nuance, the central point is to underline the lack of critical reflection on the part of architects as to their relationship to the political and financial frameworks through which they operate.

In the next two sections, De Carlo brings greater specificity to his critique of the modern movement by exploring two examples in which the architects’ supposedly benign problem-solving in the field of minimum housing and urban renewal had facilitated the exclusion of the majority from the real life of the city. He illustrates these points through the examples of two meetings of the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM).³² Through his association with Ernesto Nathan Rogers, De Carlo had himself participated in a number of CIAM’s final conferences, most famously in Otterlo in 1959, where he delivered his critical perspective on orthodox modernism entitled, “Talk on the Situation of Contemporary Architecture”.³³ The first example relates to the congress in Frankfurt in 1929, which focussed on the issue of housing shortages across Europe.³⁴ This was a potent example of limiting the field in which architecture could intervene to purely technical questions of ‘how’ to minimise costs. The problem of housing shortages was hugely important but, rather than ‘competing to see who could cut down the most’, De Carlo suggests that questions should have been raised regarding the underlying assumptions of cost and quality reduction. These are questions that he believed still needed to be raised in his own time:

³⁰ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 6.

³¹ While broadly consistent with left-wing political discourse at the time, other contemporaneous commentators on participation, notably Sherry Arnstein, had already flagged such simplification as problematic. Sherry Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (July 1969): 216-224. Arnstein’s contribution is explored further in Chapter 5.

³² De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 8.

³³ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Talk on the Situation of Contemporary Architecture,” in *CIAM 59 in Otterlo*, eds. Oscar Newman and Jürgen Joedicke (London: Alec Tirani, 1961): 80-86. The influence of De Carlo’s relationship with Rogers, his participation at Otterlo and subsequent involvement with Team 10 are discussed further in Chapter 2.

³⁴ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 7.

we have a right to ask “why” housing should be as cheap as possible and not, for example, rather expensive; “why” instead of making every effort to reduce it to the minimum levels of surface, of space, of thickness, of materials, etc., we should not try to make it spacious, protected, isolated, comfortable, well equipped, rich in opportunities for privacy, communication, exchange, personal creativity, etc.³⁵

In line with a rising tide of critical perspectives on the failures of mass housing at the time, De Carlo goes on to describe how even the supposed architectural compensations for minimum housing offered by the solutions of the Frankfurt congress—‘more air, more light, more sun, more green area’—were all ‘eliminated in concrete practice as useless accessories’. In this way, the focus on the specifics of the technical solution, without directing the same critical attention to the broader frame in which the design operation was being performed, not only failed to improve the situation for people but facilitated a further degradation of their environment. While these critiques of the design of mass housing were common currency at the time, De Carlo was driving them in a very particular direction. For him, the design of mass housing should not be abandoned but improved—specifically, by expanding the scope of the architect beyond the narrow window of designing solutions to predetermined problems. This need for a broader view of the place of design intervention is crucial in De Carlo’s analysis and brings him to the consideration of process:

Proposals for the solution of problems necessarily stand midway between the definition of goals and the evaluation of effects. The refusal to correlate one’s own contribution with the two poles of motivation and control is a typical manifestation of the idiocy of forced specialization.³⁶

Here, De Carlo begins to argue that the process of design needs to be considered as just one moment within a greater process and that equal critical attention must be paid to the ‘definition of goals’ and the ‘evaluation of effects’. This expansion of the scope and extension of the process in which architects involve themselves will become crucial for his formulation of a critical practice of architecture.

In Hoddesdon in 1951, De Carlo observes the same reductive process as at Frankfurt, this time related to the issue of urban renewal. He argues that, from the viewpoint of those in power, the key value of architecture in both these instances was to provide intellectual cover for processes that had already been initiated by landowning capital and state bureaucracy.³⁷ At Frankfurt, De Carlo saw the efforts as

³⁵ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 7

³⁶ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 7

³⁷ ‘The Architectural exercises at Hoddesdon furnished once again a cultural justification for an operation of political and economic plunder.’ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 8

generally well-meaning but ultimately detrimental due to their failure to question the problems they were setting out to solve. At Hoddesdon, the naked truth of architects was as an ‘operative appendage’ of financial and bureaucratic power used to clear the city of ‘everything that was poor and socially unbecoming: negroes and southerners, immigrants or lumpenproletariat, foreign workers or workers of any kind’.³⁸ Here again, he sets up the underlying conflict of control over the built environment between the ‘powerful’ and the ‘powerless’ as two absolute and unconnected blocs.

In the final section of his critique of the contemporary situation of architecture entitled, ‘Good reasons for the non-credibility of Architecture’, De Carlo summarises his previous points by framing the legacy of the modern movement as a phoney battle between repetitive and uncritical ‘Business’ architecture and an elitist and fantastical ‘Academy’ architecture. De Carlo ultimately sees them as two sides of the same coin, as ‘usually those who negate themselves in public work for real estate speculation in private’.³⁹ In his critique of the academic tendency, De Carlo mounts a critique of its ineffective utopianism, which for him had come at the cost of dealing with the real issues of the moment:

the whole problem of planning for the greater number has been eluded, by slipping into monumentalism of formal utopia with a great production of “hypotheses” for mausoleum, mega-structures, universal systems, futurables etc designed for the most part for art galleries.⁴⁰

Articulating the dichotomy between the real needs of the ‘greater number’ and the facile utopias of architects designed as art pieces becomes significant to his development of the realistic utopia as an alternative form. Here, he also considers the use of images in the portrayal of architecture in journals to highlight a crucial absence in the meaningless conflict between the two sides—the actual user of architecture:

Apart from some few exceptional cases, there is not a magazine or newspaper column which illustrates architecture taking the user into account, which furnishes news about how architecture really functions in its daily existence, which publishes images - photographs or articles - in which the people are present who use, transform, and recompose the three dimensional physical organism which they have been given; as if architecture were only a potential space and not an actual place, concrete, made of materials and people in a permanent and continually changing relationship.⁴¹

³⁸ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 8

³⁹ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 8.

⁴⁰ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 8.

⁴¹ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 9.

Foregrounding of the absence of the user concludes the first half of “Il pubblico”, as De Carlo lays out his indictment of ‘the unconsciousness—or the congenital irresponsibility—of architecture with regard to motivations and consequences’.⁴² This failure, evident even in ‘the history of the best architectural movement’, is for De Carlo the root cause of the crisis of credibility facing architecture at the time of publication.

“Il pubblico dell’architettura” Part 2: Participation as Proposition

Having identified architecture’s lack of tools to maintain criticality towards the structures that commission and fund it, and having pointed to the absence of the user as central to this limitation, De Carlo moves in the second half of the text to propose how architecture could obtain the ability to be critical by refocussing on the user as its fundamental protagonist. Here, he opposes the existing model of architecture, which he refers to as ‘authoritarian planning’, with his proposed model of participatory architecture, or ‘process planning’.

In the section entitled ‘Architecture is too important to be left to the Architects’, De Carlo introduces his proposal for participation. He observes in the society of his time ‘an intricate paradox that while human activities multiply and tend to become diversified and present everywhere, the decisions about where and how they should take shape tend to be more and more concentrated in the spheres of economic, bureaucratic and technological power.’ Architecture now had to choose to either reinforce or resolve this paradox by taking a side, either ‘the side of the power structure or on the side of those who are overwhelmed and excluded by the power structure’.⁴³ For De Carlo the choice of taking the side of those who are outside-of yet subject-to the power structure would require a ‘real mutation’ in the practice of architecture, whereby its field of operations would be radically expanded and democratised. It would be via a close and careful reworking of the architectural process that the radical equality demanded by De Carlo can be achieved and, in his words: ‘all barriers between builders and users must be abolished, so that building and using become two different aspects of the same planning process’.⁴⁴ Centrally this involved a redefinition of architecture as ‘made of materials and people in a permanent and constantly changing relationship’.⁴⁵ Here De Carlo is enlarging the conception of architecture in two dimensions. Firstly he expands what is considered as the activity of design to cover all decisions which frame the

⁴² De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 9.

⁴³ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 9.

⁴⁴ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 10.

⁴⁵ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 9.

project and all the consequences which follow on the design. Through this notion of architecture-as-process he articulates a notion of architecture comprising its physical materiality, the operations of the people who inhabit it and, crucially, the relationship between the two.

From this redefinition De Carlo is able to articulate his idea for how architecture could act critically within society, in the next section, titled: ‘Architecture is the material cause for the context in which it is placed’.⁴⁶ At first this title appears erroneous; how can architecture be the cause of its own context? In later English re-translations, it has been altered. First, Zucchi changed it slightly to ‘Architecture is the physical determinant of the context in which it is placed’.⁴⁷ Later, Blundell et al.—claiming the original to be ‘somewhat literal and unclear’—changed it to a more subdued ‘Architecture alters the context in which it is placed’.⁴⁸ I would argue that the paradox is not accidental; De Carlo is explicitly proposing a very different model for understanding the relationship of architecture to society than simple mono-directional readings of cause and effect. He makes clear that he views architecture as having a ‘superstructural’ political role and, thus, any change in architecture is dependent on ‘the transformations of the structures of society’. Yet this dependence is not to be used as an excuse for apathetic resignation. Rather, he sees this relationship of dependence as ‘dialectical’, forming a kind of feedback loop, where changes in one sphere support, instigate and shape changes in the other. The ‘motivations’ produced in the social sphere are given ‘concrete tangibility’ within architecture, so that the architectural intervention ‘projected toward structural transformation becomes the “material cause” of the situation in which it is placed, and as such feeds back into the structure of society contributing to its transformation’.⁴⁹ Significantly, it is architecture’s propositional nature, through both the image and the constructed ‘event’, that enables this relationship to operate.

Architecture has the incalculable advantage over other activities of being able to produce concrete images of what the physical environment would be like if the structure of society were different: of being able to wedge physically perceptible and experienceable facts into the narrow margins of choice (into the wounds opened up by the contradictions) of the structure as it is today.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 10. The original Italian is “L’architettura è causa materiale del contesto in cui si colloca,” 9.

⁴⁷ De Carlo, “Architecture’s Public,” in Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 210.

⁴⁸ De Carlo, “Architecture’s Public,” in Blundell-Jones et al., *Architecture and Participation*, 14. The editors note that ‘the original in *Parametro* was somewhat literal and unclear in places’, 3.

⁴⁹ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 10.

⁵⁰ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 10.

While it is yet to be named as such, I argue that this notion is tied to what he will later call the realistic utopia and which he will use to describe the critical role of the propositional images within his thesis of participation. De Carlo here outlines a goal to ‘change the whole range of objects and subjects which participate in the architectural process at the present time’.⁵¹ Building on his longstanding ‘commitment to antiformalism’, he begins to formulate a new role for the object in architecture, one that acknowledges its position within complex networks of social, political and financial relationships as well as the processes by which it is planned, produced, used and transformed.⁵² Participation here is framed as both a means to generate the complex understanding required of each and every situation into which architecture intervenes, as a well as the means by which to navigate this complexity:

it means enlarging the field of participation in the definition and use of the plan and therefore introducing into the system of planning a whole set of complex variables which could never be composed into balanced situations except through the use of procedural systems based on the continual alteration of observations, propositions and evaluations.⁵³

The sheer complexity of this radically expanded vision of architecture, with all its objects, relationships and processes as equal sites of intervention, required for De Carlo a new objective method far removed from ‘vagueness of exploration based on inspiration and taste’. To imagine this, he draws a parallel between ‘Participation and scientific method’, which is the title of the next section.⁵⁴ He describes participation as operating across the entire process of architecture through a series of iterative and interconnected stages. Whereas he frames the traditional process of architecture as a quest to eliminate variables and fix permanent solutions, the process he promotes is one in which new variables are constantly being brought in and questions expanded.

Here, the question of reaching consensus becomes key.⁵⁵ For De Carlo, the problem in the various well-meaning attempts to plan ‘for’ users in architecture is that, while consensus may be achieved through consultation and study, it is then ‘frozen into a permanent fact’. If the planning process is truly reoriented to plan ‘with’ users, then ‘consensus remains permanently open; it is renewed by confrontation with the planned event along the whole arch of its existence and, reciprocally, renews the planned event adapting

⁵¹ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 10.

⁵² The quote is taken from Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, trans. Jessica Levine (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 58. De Carlo’s antiformalist position and its relevance to his emerging ideas of participation and the realistic utopia are explored in detail in Chapter 2.

⁵³ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 10.

⁵⁴ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 10.

⁵⁵ Recently Markus Miessen has used Chantal Mouffe’s critique of consensus to problematise notions of participation in architecture as discussed in Chapter 5. I argue that consensus for De Carlo had a very different role in participation to the one which Miessen ascribes to it.

it to the demands of a support which continues to repropose itself.⁵⁶ This radical and unending openness, which characterises his expanded vision of participation, becomes a means for the project to become ‘resistant to the wear and tear of adverse circumstances and time itself’.⁵⁷ De Carlo positions the role of the architect not as one of seeking consensus but of active stimulation of conflict through questioning the broader structures that frame the projects: ‘conservative positions can easily be upset when the hidden side of the mechanisms of development are illuminated, shedding light at the same time on a condition of abuse and a prospect of progress’.⁵⁸ This points to the dual ability of the image to simultaneously critique the existing ‘abuse’ and propose the possibility of ‘progress’.

In De Carlo’s schema, participation necessarily operates through permanent confrontation, resulting in forms of consensus that are never closed. Planning is fundamentally transformed from an ‘act’ into a ‘process’ that operates through a series of three interconnected and iterative steps or phases: ‘the discovery of needs, the formulation of hypotheses and the use follow therefore one from the other, but they are also correlated in a cyclical relationship’.⁵⁹ To achieve this goal, the role of architecture itself must expand far beyond the ‘designing table’ to include in its remit all the ‘motivations and consequences’ of that design, from the establishment of the brief to the artefact in use. For De Carlo participation must be present in all these stages. The analogies of feedback, rebound and reticulation articulated here, are returned to many times throughout his descriptions of participation and process-planning can be seen as the defining feature of his proposal to reframe architecture as ‘process’. The fundamental importance of notion of process is visualised in an illustration included in the later publication of *An Architecture of Participation* (Fig. 1.1 below).

⁵⁶ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 11.

⁵⁷ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 11.

⁵⁸ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 11.

⁵⁹ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 11.

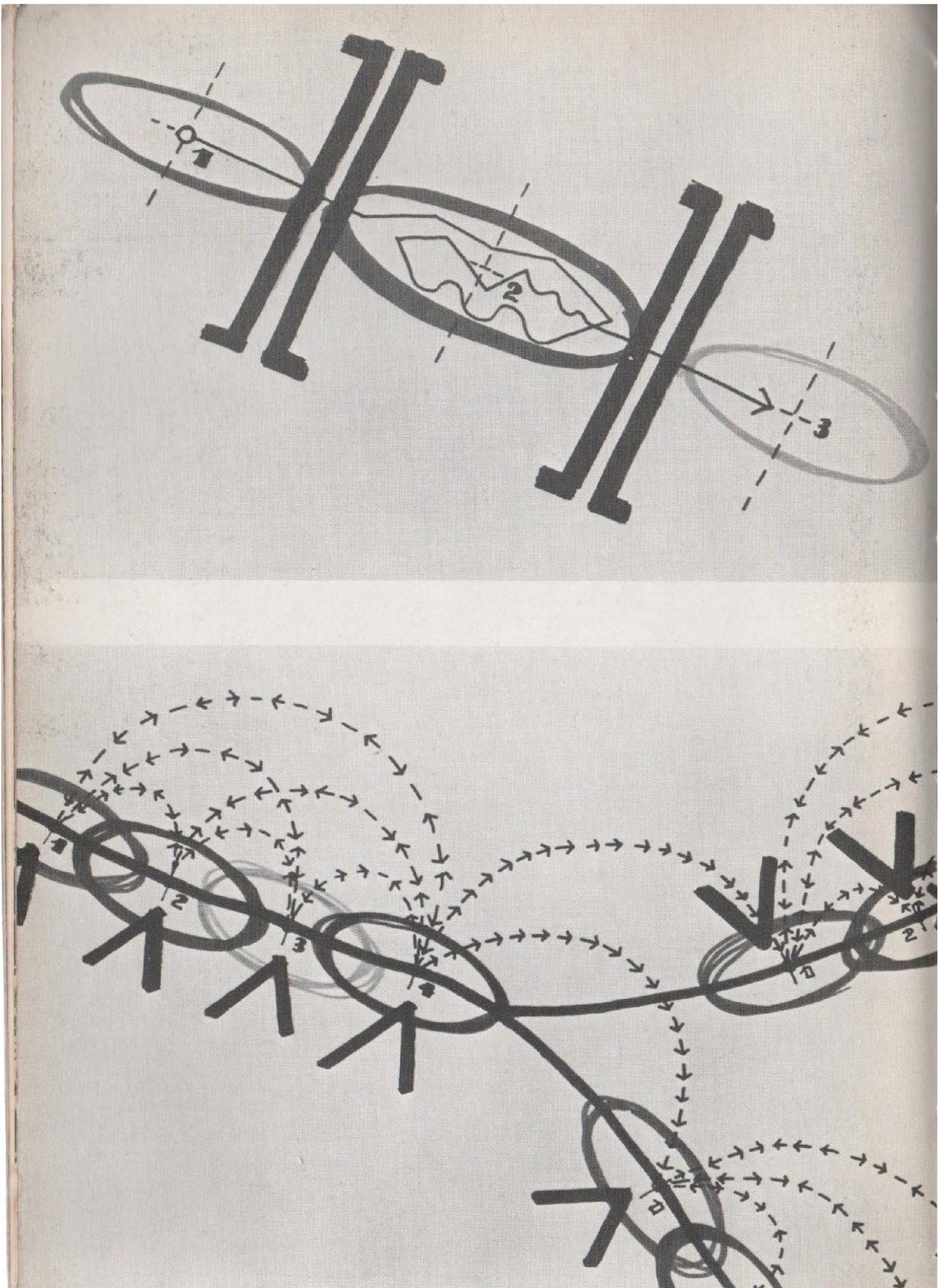


Figure 1.1. Images from the 1972 publication of *An Architecture of Participation*. The two diagrams contrast the 'linear' process of 'authoritarian planning' (above) versus the iterative and interconnected process of an architecture of participation (below). Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 34.

The first phase of this reformulation of architecture-as-process is titled ‘The discovery of the users’ needs’ and relates to the process of decision making about the program, site and budget, which traditionally precedes the architect’s involvement. Within De Carlo’s reworked schema all the assumptions on which these choices are based are opened up to critical reformulation by the user and, by extension, the architect. He explains ‘that by “participation of the users” we do not mean that users should work at the designing table or that users dictate while the architects transcribe linearly transforming aspirations in images’. This would result in a simple inversion within an unchanged system. Rather than asking people what they want, he proposes ‘a preliminary activity of information and criticism aimed at exposing all the imposed value systems, dissipating the alienation which the centuries old imposition of these systems has produced’.⁶⁰ This was not intended as a one-way ‘educational’ intervention but, rather, aimed at ‘stimulating a consciousness so precise and cutting as to provoke the rebound of new information and criticism’.⁶¹ This ‘rebound’ would require ‘risking the very cultural structures (experiences, values and codes) of those who set off the process’ - the architects themselves.⁶²

De Carlo underlines the fundamental interconnectedness of all moments of participation in the project via an explanation of the second phase, ‘The formulation of hypotheses’.⁶³ In ‘authoritarian planning’, the design phase simply translates the objectives that have been ‘defined once and for all’. In process planning, by contrast, the setting of objectives is perpetually under revision. Rather than being fixed through the first phase, the objectives ‘are defined through a continual confrontation between the pressure of real needs and images of spatial configurations which refines the needs and perfects the configurations until they reach a condition of sufficient equilibrium’ which, nevertheless, remains ‘unstable because of the further mobility of the process’.⁶⁴ In other words, any design ‘hypothesis’ is primarily a means to stimulate further critique, refinement and replacement with a more suitable image.

Here De Carlo returns to the agency of the propositional architectural image, framed in its critical engagement with the realities in which it is set and made tangible through the critiques of the user via participation. The function of design is not to fix aspects of reality into an ‘immobile shape’ but, rather, to ‘open the way for a dialectical process in which reality expands continuously under the solicitation of the images and the images become more and more diversified with the inclusion of new expansions of reality.’ Rather than seeking to reduce the number of variables into a solution, process planning aims to

⁶⁰ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 12.

⁶¹ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 12.

⁶² De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 12.

⁶³ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 12.

⁶⁴ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 12.

expand the range of variables, alternatives and questions through a sequence of hypotheses. These are simultaneously ‘launched by’ the process of participation and ‘aim at’ eliciting further participation. Like the proposition of participation in “Il pubblico” itself, each hypothesis is both a critique of an existing situation and a proposition for a new situation. By reframing design as hypotheses, De Carlo also highlights its operation in an iterative chain, the imperfection and impermanence of each instance and its inherent quality of calling for its own replacement: ‘Each hypothesis enlarges the field of forces already involved by the proceeding hypothesis and therefore brings about its own replacement by a successive and more appropriate hypothesis’.⁶⁵ Figure 1.1 above articulates the way images and iterations of design can draw from and enact influence from other stages and even other projects. The illustration depicts complex trails of bi-directional influence spring off from each moment of design, which are themselves interconnected and overlapping.

Each hypothesis can be understood as an irritant, a critique, as well as a proposition in that it points back toward the original formulation of needs and objectives to question ‘from the very beginning the legitimacy of the constraints which are imposed’.⁶⁶ De Carlo uses the case of housing, where the constraints of budget and standards vary widely according to the social group for which the housing is intended ‘as if the human needs of the two groups were not exactly identical’.⁶⁷ He proposes that the design itself, as hypothesis, operates to call into question such seemingly immutable constraints as the budget, the chosen site, and the regulatory codes and standards wherever these conflict with the genuine needs of the users. The work of design then becomes explicitly critical of the framework in which it operates:

The job of the planner is to open the sequence of hypotheses enlarging the image beyond the margins of the framework imposed by the client: to show what we could (should) have if instead of moving within a condition of preordained subjection we moved according to an objective confrontation with real rights.⁶⁸

De Carlo frames the work of the hypothesis as twofold. The first task is to ‘reveal to the consciousness of the user the brutality of the authoritarian models attributed to his present condition by means of comparison with the models we would have a right to if the economic, scientific and technological means available today were used to satisfy his real needs’.⁶⁹ Following this catalytic exposé, ‘the successive

⁶⁵ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 12, 98.

⁶⁶ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 98.

⁶⁷ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 98.

⁶⁸ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 98.

⁶⁹ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 98.

hypotheses begin to involve the user directly as protagonist in a progressive action of selection and definition of the needs which the operation must satisfy until a precise definition of the architectural or urbanistic image which is to be achieved and carried out'.⁷⁰ Accordingly, while the first attempts by the designer are aimed primarily at *stimulating* participation through critique, the subsequent versions are developed *through* participation.

When 'a point of equilibrium is reached which permits the putting into effect - the materialization in physical space - of the last hypothesis considered satisfactory', the iterative sequence moves into a new phase, that of 'Control and use'. Further expanding the scope and duration of the design project, De Carlo argues that design 'does not end with the construction of the architectural object.'⁷¹ Rather, it continues in the same critical, confrontational sequence of iterative developments as in the previous stages. Here, participation is extended to properly include occupants' interactions with the building as an object that can be modified, but which is also capable of framing those modifications. Again a dialectic relationship of complex, mutual influence is set up, differentiating it from notions of flexibility and self-build that were being developed by others at the time, by framing these interactions as a form of productive conflict between building and user.

During the preceding phases, the confrontation takes place between the user, the architect and the broader systems of power framing their interaction. At the point of building, 'the conflicts are shifted to the relationship between the architectural object and those who use it'. De Carlo describes this relationship in similar terms to the situation of reciprocal criticism that exists between the user and designer: the relationship between user and both architect and building is 'dialectical'. Both the user and the building should 'possess aptitudes for change'. He highlights the mono-directional influence of buildings on users under authoritarian planning, where the user can only 'adapt himself to the architectural object' and no reciprocal adaptation of the object is possible. In process planning, the 'creative pressure of users' is enabled: a confrontation which 'adjusts, takes away, adds, substitutes' is not an after-effect of the plan but exists as part of the planning process itself. For De Carlo, adaptation by users *is* design, not a *function of* design. The building is itself a hypothesis to be tested and improved on by the user as the ultimate 'protagonist' of the design project.

⁷⁰ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 98. Here I have relied on Zucchi's subsequent re-translation of the original, as the sequencing of the English version in *Parametro* does not correspond to the original Italian. Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 214.

⁷¹ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 98.

In process planning, De Carlo expands the scope of participation and, by extension, the role of the architect. By including both the initial framing of each project (typically performed by the funders and commissioners of architecture) as well as the processes of use adaptation and change use (which typically follow on from an architect's involvement) within the remit of participation, his reformulation of practice is far from a 'negation' of the architect's power and responsibility; it is, rather, a liberation from subservience and a radical enlargement of the profession's scope.⁷²

A radically expanded notion of architecture, understood both as practice and as object, is ultimately what De Carlo is arguing for in "Il pubblico". The common understanding of participation, as an expanded notion of the client beyond those commissioning the project to all those who use it, while fundamental, is only one aspect of this. He argues for the expansion of the remit of the architect to include a critical examination of the consequences and motivations of each architectural event. This requires an expanded understanding of the architectural process as being properly constituted by all the decisions related to the framing of projects and the ongoing life of buildings after construction. Through participation, '[t]he whole vast set of variables which institutional culture and practice had suppressed come back into play and the field of reality in which architecture intervenes becomes macroscopic and complex'.⁷³ In this way, participation enables the practice of architecture to approach the complexity of the situations in which it seeks to intervene.

De Carlo describes a very particular set of qualities that operate both at the level of the 'practice' and in each architectural 'object' or 'event' and which underlie this expanded practice of architecture. He does not give a specific name to this quality within "Il pubblico", yet its presence is clear throughout his descriptions. The fundamental role of the architect here is reframed not as a finder of solutions but as one who locates 'cracks' and contradictions and uses these to provide 'images' of alternatives. This quality operates at both the large and small scale in his formulation, which can be seen as a schema of process planning itself, as a totally reworked image of architectural practice. It is also the quality which is called upon at the level of each 'tentative hypothesis' of design, again framed as images. I will argue that, speaking a few years later, De Carlo brings these qualities together in a specific term—'a realistic Utopia'—and places it at the centre of his conception of participation, thereby articulating a very particular role of the speculative image.⁷⁴

⁷² The claims that participation involves a dilution of the architect's authority are discussed in Chapter 5.

⁷³ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 98.

⁷⁴ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25.

The Realistic Utopia within An Architecture of Participation

In October 1971, De Carlo delivered a lecture in Melbourne at the invitation of Australian architect and critic Robin Boyd, whose unexpected death days earlier added an emotionally-charged context to the event.⁷⁵ It was the final in a series of three annual lectures initiated in 1969 entitled ‘The Architecture of the Seventies’, a title which conveyed a speculative intent to anticipate future architectural developments. De Carlo’s lecture responded to what he referred to as the ‘hypotheses’ put forth in the first two lectures: the first from J.M. Richards, editor of the British journal *Architectural Review*, the second from Peter Blake, editor of the American journal *Architectural Forum*.⁷⁶ De Carlo summarises their respective positions as Richards providing an account of the legacy of the modern movement in producing a generally technically-driven built environment, punctuated by ‘exceptional architectural episodes’, while Blake had focussed on the emerging trends of ‘disorder’ and influences from Pop-Art.⁷⁷ In his own contribution, De Carlo revisited much of the same content of “Il pubblico”, situating it within the frames provided by the previous contributions of Richards and Blake, building on Richards’ critique of the modern movement and using Blake as a foil in terms of ‘populistic jubilation’. The lectures would all be published in English as ‘The Melbourne Architecture Papers’ series and De Carlo would later work with the publisher, Il Saggiatore, to publish Italian translations of the three talks in a single compilation.⁷⁸

De Carlo differentiated his contribution as based less on the evaluation of current trends but, rather, ‘a projection of my own hopes’. The lecture bears the explicit title *An Architecture of Participation* and is a clear extension and development of some of the key concepts introduced in “Il pubblico”. It covers much of the same material, whereby the critique of power relations still forms the backbone of the argument, the modern movement is again called upon to explain how architecture has lost its relevance, and the proposed process of participation is articulated through same, three, interconnected phases. The crucial addition for my reading is the introduction and articulation of the specific term ‘realistic Utopia’, which forms part of an expanded section dealing with the role of the architectural ‘counter-image’ in relation to changes within society.

⁷⁵ The Oration was given hours after the public memorial service for Boyd: Neil Clerehan. “Editors note,” in De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, iii.

⁷⁶ J. M. Richards, *A Critic’s View* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1971); Peter Blake, *The New Forces* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1971).

⁷⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2, Blake had also used De Carlo’s own work, the colleges in Urbino, as a particular emerging approach: Blake, *The New Forces*, 37-39.

⁷⁸ Giancarlo De Carlo, Peter Blake, J.M Richards, *L’architettura degli anni settanta*, (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1973).

In *An Architecture of Participation*, the image of architecture is key both in the diagnosis of the profession's ills and as a site for its renewal. While the launching point for "Il pubblico" had been the recent student attempts at reforming architectural education in Italy, *An Architecture of Participation* begins with a detailed analysis of the contemporary representation of architecture with explicit reference to its exclusion of the user. This is developed from the last of the 'good reasons for the non-credibility of architecture' as they had appeared in "Il pubblico", which dealt specifically with the absence of the user in architectural publications.⁷⁹ De Carlo contrasts the 'compulsive need to eliminate people' in modern architectural publications with the forms of representation that pre-dated 'the appearance of perspective (the individual mono-centrism of vision)'. In these earlier representations, which lacked a singular prioritised view, '[p]eople appeared as the real subjects of objects created for their use. Architecture consisted not simply of buildings but of people and buildings bound in a relationship of reciprocal necessity.'⁸⁰

Through the explanation of the 'realistic Utopia' the transformative role of images becomes central to his conception of participation. In content and key argumentation, the section on the realistic utopia plays a similar role in *An Architecture of Participation* as the section in "Il pubblico" on 'Architecture is the material cause for the context in which it is placed'. Both are an attempt to articulate his belief that architecture was capable of changing the social structures on which it depends through a system of feedback, involving the iterative production of 'counter-images'. In both texts, this material follows immediately after De Carlo's attempt to define his notion of participation in architecture and provides the first justification for this move.

In *An Architecture of Participation*, De Carlo first uses the term utopia as a rhetorical objection to his own scheme for participation—defined, conditionally, as the state in which 'everyone is directly or equally involved in the process of decision making'. The utopian end-state of participation could be described as an architecture existing in complete harmony with all who use it or, as De Carlo himself describes it, 'when either everyone takes part equally in the management of the power structure, or when the power structure has been completely dissolved into a state of permanent shared decision making'.⁸¹ It is an architecture of total freedom and total equality, the structure of a particular kind of politics.⁸² In outlining his vision of participation, De Carlo acknowledges that 'someone will raise the immediate objection that I am describing a Utopia, and this is a good objection. It is, however, a realistic Utopia, and this makes a

⁷⁹ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 9.

⁸⁰ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 253.

⁸¹ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25. De Carlo goes on to state that 'the practice of participation can find its full definition only when participation is in practice', 29.

⁸² De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25. Numerous commentators have connected De Carlo's attitudes on participation to his anarchist politics. See for example Francesco Samassa "A building is not a building is not a building: The anarchitecture of Giancarlo De Carlo" in *Giancarlo De Carlo: Percorsi* (Milan: Il Poligrafo, Venice: IUAV Archivio Progetto, 2004).

big difference'.⁸³ Rather than defending participation against the accusation of utopianism, however, he embraces the term and uses his notion of participation to define an alternative variety of utopia, one capable of engaging with the realities in which it is set. Over several pages, De Carlo then explains how the realistic utopia can be understood and enacted, sketching out a very particular way of reframing the utility of the utopian form. In "Il pubblico", as discussed in the previous part, De Carlo had dismissed the work of contemporary architecture as avoiding the real issues of mass society by escaping into the production of 'formal utopias (...) designed for the most part for art galleries.'⁸⁴ Here, he re-states the common critique of utopia as fantasy, which he attributes to avoidance of the true complexity of context. The fundamental weakness of such an approach for De Carlo is the lack of concern for the many variables of which the current situation is composed. He proposes an alternative form, the 'realistic' utopia which, instead of substituting these variables, retains them and focusses on reworking the relationships between them.

Utopia, as it is commonly understood, is an impossible notion because it is derived from a total alteration of the context. That is: it does not take into account all the variables constituting the reality to which it is opposed. If, instead, we take all present variables into account, and if we assume that their relationship could be different - because, in fact, they could be - then the Utopia is realistic.⁸⁵

De Carlo's conception of the realistic utopia can be understood to operate at two quite distinct levels in his thesis of participation. At the most obvious, the entire reworking of architectural practice implied by 'participation' is a realistic utopia. Simultaneously, the realistic utopia, understood as a very specific kind of architectural 'image' or 'object', is the primary means by which *An Architecture of Participation* is elicited, evolved and enacted. De Carlo had already sketched a role for the speculative architectural image in terms of societal change in "Il pubblico". While stressing the total dependence of architecture on the societal structures in which it is produced, he emphasises the possibility for changes within the 'superstructure' of architecture to resonate with and effect the ongoing changes in society at large. He located this change-making potential of architecture in the projective act of image-making. Specifically, architecture was 'able to produce concrete images of what the physical environment could be like if the structures of society were different'.⁸⁶ It is in this context that De Carlo argues for the potential role of the architectural image in stimulating change in surrounding social structures by exposing their inherent conflicts and contradictions.

⁸³ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25.

⁸⁴ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 8.

⁸⁵ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25.

⁸⁶ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 10.

He articulates the possibility for the realistic utopia as an architectural image to critically affect its context through two specific ‘premises.’ The first is that architectural images, understood as speculative reconfigurations of the physical and relational context to better fit the ‘reality’ of the social forces in existence, can be effective even when they remain unrealised and, as such, purely speculative.

an architectural image can have important effects even if does not succeed in becoming a reality.... It can explode the most deeply rooted commonplaces, expose the stupidity or injustice of situations which are passively accepted, awaken the consciousness of rights which no-one had dared to demand, outline a goal hitherto unknown which, henceforth becomes a conscious aim.⁸⁷

In support of this claim, he provides examples of ‘counter-heroes’ who ‘produced a whole series of images which, although not immediately successful, have nevertheless not only upset architectural and urbanistic thought, but have also contributed to the rotation of political and social perspective of their contemporaries and of the following generations’. He includes on this list ‘Robert Owen, Victor Considerant, Benjamin Richardson, William Morris, Piotr Kropotkin, Patrick Geddes, and - why not? Mr. Paxton and Mr. Eiffel, and then Henry Sullivan, Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier for a large part of their contradictory contributions’. This list provides insight into what De Carlo considered an ‘architectural image’ in the first place. While he is not explicit about what ‘an architectural image’ comprises, the list would suggest that ‘images’ can be understood as a diverse set of forms including political writings, architectural representations, and constructed buildings. In both texts, De Carlo refers directly to images as drawings and other projective media, while at other times he speaks of written images and of literally ‘constructing’ images.⁸⁸ From these various uses, the term ‘image’ is taken to represent a projection of architecture in its broadest sense.

De Carlo’s second premise for the efficacy of the realistic utopia is that, although existing systems of society, politics and finance may seem immobile and unchangeable, they are never perfect and always contain internal contradictions. Using spatial metaphors, he describes the inherent contradictions of present systems of power as ‘cracks’, ‘gaps’ and ‘networks of fissures’. These become the spaces in which innovative events can be inserted and, from there, can grow to destabilise and even ‘rupture’ the present system. De Carlo’s formulation of working in the cracks can be understood as operating at two levels: by drawing attention to contradiction or injustice; and by using the opportunity of that ‘gap’ to frame an

⁸⁷ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 26.

⁸⁸ De Carlo’s expansive notion of the image can be connected to his later notion of architecture as a mobile idea which precedes and lasts beyond the physical existence of a particular building. This connection is outlined in Chapter 4.

alternative which is able to grow as a challenge the structures from which it had developed.⁸⁹ Taken together, the notions of images having effects to highlight contradictions, and of these contradictions being the primary site for these images to operate articulate what De Carlo saw as the possibility for the realistic utopia, understood as an architectural image, to provide a critical tool within the architecture of participation.

It is important at this point to seek some clarification of what De Carlo means when he speaks of ‘reality’ and the condition of being ‘realistic’. ‘Context’ and ‘reality’ are often joined or equated in his writing.⁹⁰ It is the close and critical attendance to context that enables the ‘fantasy’ of utopia to become ‘realistic’ and, therefore, productive. When discussing the erasure of the user in contemporary architectural publications, he speaks of the current ‘dichotomy of architecture and reality’ in terms of what he perceives as a prevalent notion that architecture should not be ‘contaminated with the concrete aspects of everyday life’, a notion evidenced by the absence of people in architectural representations.⁹¹ By qualifying utopia as realistic, and by tying ‘reality’ explicitly to the social, this notion can be understood as quite distinct from what is often understood by ‘Utopian’ architecture. Here, context is explicitly conceptualised as the social reality: ‘the context is the whole pattern of social forces, with all its conflicts and contradictions’.⁹² Context and, therefore reality, is understood as a vast network of relationships. It is these which must be closely attended to in order to make the realistic utopia viable:

If the counter-image of the organization of physical space, without omitting the forces which act in the context and taking into account both their present and potential energies, upsets the image which is derived from the present artificial situation, then that counter image is a realistic Utopia.⁹³

This passage defines a key quality of the realistic utopia, that of being both critical and propositional. De Carlo describes the realistic utopia as a specific kind of image, the counter-image, that is, an alternative formulation of how to do things. While initially he introduces the realistic utopia to describe his

⁸⁹ De Carlo offers ‘the case of communication’ as a proof for the fertility of internal contradictions as sites for alternatives to grow. Here he observes the way in which ‘all the systems of the so-called civilized world’ seek social control by making communication technology ubiquitous. Yet to do so requires them to be made ever smaller and cheaper, which results in the contradiction that ‘[t]he system produces instruments of control to increase its power, but, at the same time, these means become immediately available to those who intend to defend their independence against the expansion of the system.’ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 27.

⁹⁰ ‘[T]he procedure suffers at every stage from the abstractness accepted at the beginning when the activity was taken out of its context, cutting its ties with reality’. Giancarlo De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings” 24.

⁹¹ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 3.

⁹² De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 12. The centrality of the notion of conflict in De Carlo’s work is highlighted by Ludovico Centis. According to Centis, it was the exploration of conflict and contradictions within the present conditions that interested De Carlo in Utopia as a specific tool. Ludovico Centis, “The Public of Architecture: Conflict and Consensus,” *San Rocco* 12 (2016): 69.

⁹³ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25-26.

reformulation of practice towards participation, here it is related to the organisation of physical space. As discussed above, his notion of the image was broad and can be taken here to include images of building configurations, city forms, societal relationships, property distribution and, indeed, design processes such as participation itself. The central point is that such counter-images are only viable if they are drawn from a comprehensive analysis of the present 'image' of these elements, the context that has framed these images and all the relational dynamics at work. Through this analysis, it is possible to identify the points of contradiction, where the 'potential energies' (particularly the needs, desires and perspectives of the users) are not satisfied by the present image and to use these as the basis for its re-formulation as a counter-image.

These counter-images themselves are open to change. The counter-image can be directly related to his 'formulation of hypotheses', which, as discussed in "Il pubblico", would replace the traditional design phase. As discussed above, the 'hypothesis' reframes the production of the architect's design work from that of finding solutions to that of producing images which catalyse discussion, debate and questioning of its underpinning assumptions. This same notion is re-iterated in *An Architecture of Participation*:

The designer's job is no longer to produce finished and unalterable solutions, but to extract solutions from a continuous confrontation with those who will use his work. His energy and imagination will be completely directed to raising the level of awareness of his partners in the discussion, and the solution will come out of the exchanges between the two, passing through a series of alternatives which come closer and closer to the real nature of the problem with which they are dealing.⁹⁴

Each 'alternative' and 'solution' here can be understood as a form of the realistic utopia, never constructed in isolation but always in direct confrontation with its possible users. By understanding the realistic utopia in terms of the hypothesis, we can see its potential mutability as part of an ongoing process: each instance of the realistic utopia being contingent on its interaction with its future users.

The schema of process planning allows us to consider the implications of the realistic utopia beyond images to actualised objects of architecture. Although he uses the concept of stages as a heuristic device in his description of the architecture of participation, De Carlo makes clear that it is continuous and iterative. The building itself is only one in an ongoing series of hypotheses, themselves each a means to reconsider the original needs, which, once revised, set off a new round of hypotheses:

⁹⁴ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 37.

In process planning, the carrying out in three-dimensional physical terms of the plan is a tentative hypothesis. Its verification comes about through use and is therefore entrusted to the user who confronts the built environment in experiencing it. this phase which adjusts, subtracts, adds to, or modifies the design is still part of the project.⁹⁵

In *An Architecture of Participation*, De Carlo clarifies his understanding of the possible agency of architectural form itself in relation to social change. Here it is framed, in very similar terms to the realistic utopia, as something that can exert influence, but only indirectly:

At this point, not to be misunderstood, let me say that I believe that forms can modify human behaviour. Moreover, I believe there are circumstances in which forms have the potential to shape images which can contribute to social change. But I believe that this process is reticulate, not linear; that forms react on human behaviour only through feedbacks; that these feedbacks happen and have positive influence only when forms maintain a continuous coherence with the context which generates them; that the context is the whole pattern of social forces, with all its conflicts and contradictions, and not simply the pattern of institutional forces.⁹⁶

These statements, taken together, provide an understanding of what De Carlo saw as the means through which the objects of architecture, both images and built forms, could actively participate in a dialogue with society understood as a complexity of antagonistic forces. For him architectural forms do not act directly but, rather, ‘shape images’, which themselves may ‘contribute’ to social change via reticulated processes of feedback. Again, as with the realistic utopia, these forms can only have a ‘positive influence’ when they are closely attentive to the context from which they are drawn. Context here is used in an expanded sense, drawing in a complex network of relational associations. Accordingly, it is possible to extend De Carlo’s concept of the realistic utopia to potentially include all of the products of architecture, but only ever as tentative, suggestive moments, intended to instigate their own replacement and thriving and continuing only in concert with their intended users.

⁹⁵ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Architecture’s Public,” in Blundell-Jones et al., *Architecture and Participation*, 21. The idea that buildings themselves can be ‘hypotheses’ underpinned De Carlo’s staged approach for the Villaggio Matteotti housing project in Terni. There, an initial phase of the project was constructed and was intended, through its use and feedback from residents, to inform the design of subsequent stages. The project never proceeded beyond the first stage, leaving this process itself as an untested hypothesis, as discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

⁹⁶ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 12. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, this relates to De Carlo’s earlier work concerning the complex interactions between architectural form and social processes.

An Expanded Notion of the Realistic Utopia

This thesis addresses the question of how a practice of architecture concerned with participation can maintain criticality towards the power structures in which it operates. This chapter has returned to the original writings on participation by one of its early exponents, Giancarlo De Carlo, to argue that this was a key concern developed within his theorisations. I have argued that, for him, the entire conception of participation was aimed at establishing a method by which to enable continuous critical reformulation of all aspects of the production of the built environment. Through his model of ‘process planning’, he proposed an expansive concept of participation inclusive of all aspects of initial decision making in relation to allocation of resources and prioritisation of needs. Further I have argued that one concept, the realistic utopia, makes a particular contribution to the formulation of an explicitly critical form of participatory practice. This chapter has used De Carlo’s two principal early descriptions of participation, *An Architecture of Participation* and “Il pubblico dell’architettura”, to develop an extended definition of the realistic utopia in which his proximate ideas of counter-image, hypothesis, and reticulating, iterative processes augment its potential.

The realistic utopia has been revealed as a way of understanding the ‘architecture of participation’ as an attempt to critically understand and effect, via ‘feedbacks’, the systems in which it operates. It outlines a possibility for architecture to be critical of the social, financial and political configurations which frame each project through the production of counter-images that are simultaneously critical and propositional. Encouraging greater participation is both a goal of this process (as yet unachieved) and the key to its successful operation. Participation is the means to generate critique, and critique is the means to generate increasingly genuine opportunities for participation.

For De Carlo, the realistic utopia was distinct from utopia-as-fantasy in that it is drawn from a comprehensive analysis of the present situation and all the relational dynamics at work. Of central importance is the articulation of the realistic utopia as a counter-image *to* reality that is meticulously constructed *from* the constituent parts of that reality. The realistic utopia is able to be critical of the social structures in which it is embedded only because it attends to them in every detail, maintaining the complexity of the context as a rich network of relationships and ‘forces’ at play. In this schema it is the unresolved ‘contradictions’ of the context which offer the most fertile ground for intervention. While operating explicitly through architectural objects—images and built forms—the realistic utopia always aims beyond the objects themselves to intervene in the restructuring of the relational context in which it sits by instigating processes of collective critique, analysis and redesign. The realistic utopia is always a

hypothesis-in-process. Never closed into consensus, each form of the realistic utopia remains active until it can be replaced by a more appropriate form, itself aimed at producing its own alteration or replacement.

The realistic utopia thus operates within the schema of *An Architecture of Participation* at two levels. It is an image of the 'horizon' of genuine participation toward which the process strives. It is simultaneously the mode in which 'counter-images' are produced in a granular and iterative way to stimulate critical reflection, through participation, at each step of every 'architectural event'. The architecture of participation, as an image for reformulating practice, is itself a realistic utopia. Importantly, however, this practice involves the production of a multitude of realistic utopias, specific to each situation towards which they are aimed. The realistic utopia can thus be understood as a description of both the method and the object of *An Architecture of Participation*.

In this chapter, the concept of the realistic utopia has been articulated from De Carlo's own writings. It has been defined in terms of his own descriptions and connected to other proximate notions within his early writings on participation. This has enabled the term to be expanded beyond the brief account in which he directly named the concept. The purpose of doing so was to define it as a conceptual tool to address the question of how an architecture of participation could maintain criticality towards the structures which frame its interventions. In the subsequent chapters, the concept of the realistic utopia continues to be expanded, explored and challenged in relation to its potential as a critical mode of participatory practice. To this end, the definitions achieved in this chapter will be read against and through other contexts, first within De Carlo's own practice and then in broader disciplinary discussions of uncritical participation and ineffective criticality in architecture.

2. Tracing the Emergence of the Realistic Utopia 1950-1971.

In Chapter 1 I drew an expanded notion of De Carlo's concept, the realistic utopia, from a close reading of his two seminal essays on participation articulate a particular approach to criticality in practice. This chapter locates the concept in its historical context, thereby enabling its claims and propositions to be considered for use in other contexts. This approach runs counter to the de-historicising discussions of participatory architecture into which figures such as De Carlo are often folded. As has been argued in the previous chapter, De Carlo's notions of participation and the realistic utopia are explicit and precise conceptualisations of how a practice of architecture can operate in a way that is critical of the power structures which frame its interventions. By connecting these ideas to those that predate the naming of 'participation' as a specific term, I argue that the realistic utopia has resonance beyond those practices referred to as 'participatory'. By connecting the realistic utopia with other proximate conceptions amongst De Carlo's contemporaries, I propose that the term can incorporate related work and ideas beyond the limits of De Carlo's own practice.

A range of sources is used to contextualise the emergence the realistic utopia. These include previous scholarship on De Carlo and participatory architecture, which are read to clarify links between the notions of participation, form, image and criticality embedded in the concept of the realistic utopia. For example, biographical accounts by major commentators on De Carlo, such as Francesco Sammassa, Benedict Zucchi, John McKean and Mirko Zardini, provide important insight into the conditions that shaped De Carlo's thinking and practice during the period in which he began to formulate the idea of the realistic utopia.¹ De Carlo's own writings of the time, in which concepts of utopia and the complex relations between social action and architectural form began to emerge, are also discussed. These include journal articles and lecture notes from the 1950s onward, as well as his canonical 1966 plan and publication for the city of Urbino.² As De Carlo was heavily engaged in the period's disciplinary debates, a selection of

¹ Francesco Samassa, ed., *Giancarlo De Carlo: Pervorsi* (Milan: Il Poligrafo, Venice: IUAV Archivio Progetti, 2004); Benedict Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo* (Oxford: Butterworth, 1992); John McKean, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Layered Places* (Stuttgart: Axel Menges, 2004); Mirko Zardini, "Crestomazia decarliana/Decarlian Anthology," *Lotus International* 86 (1995): 94-107. Zardini's work, while relatively concise, is nevertheless expansive in scope. For the earlier major Italian biographies, such as Fabrizio Brunetti and Frabrizio Gesi (1981) Lamberto Rossi (1988) and Monica Perin's essay on De Carlo as a town planner (1992), I have relied on the summaries in Francesco Samassa, "Cross-sections of a complex figure," in *Giancarlo De Carlo: Pervorsi*, 215-238.

² Giancarlo De Carlo, *Urbino: la storia di una città e il piano della sua evoluzione urbanistica*, (Padova: Marsilio, 1966). Of particular note in this discussion are the series of articles written for *Casabella-continuità* through the 1950s in which he developed his critique of orthodox modernism as well as his positions on formalism and historicism. Also useful are the articles and lectures he produced during in the mid-60s which began to articulate his ideas about participation as a collective phenomenon and architectural form's potential to influence behaviour via 'feedback'. These are discussed in detail later in the chapter.

contemporaneous writing by peers is explored to shed further light on the emergence of the realistic utopia. Contributions by contemporaries such as Alison Smithson, Aldo van Eyck, Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Lucius Burckhardt locate De Carlo's thinking in relation to active debates within Italian, and international architectural debates. From these discourses, a variety of interventions that connect architecture, relationality, utopia and participation are compared and contrasted with De Carlo's realistic utopia. By drawing on this wide range of sources to elucidate the circumstances from which the idea of the realistic utopia developed, I argue that it is possible to better understand its implications and expand its scope beyond the brief description of the term given by De Carlo himself in *An Architecture of Participation*.³

The critiques and propositions integral to De Carlo's theoretical formulation of participation and the realistic utopia are read against the contexts in which he had been working and debating, from his first independent projects up to the publication of his two seminal essays in 1970 and 1972. From the outset, we can see the tensions between architectural objects, processes and relationships which would underlie his notion of participation as a critical force within architectural practice. In the 1950s, this was mainly evident in his own formal experimentation in the design of housing in tandem with the development of his 'anti-formalist' position as it played out in Italian architectural and urbanistic debates. In the 1960s, questions of process and relational context became increasingly pressing, as developed through his engagement with Team 10, his work in Urbino, his encounters with the North American context, his work with students and the XIV Milan Triennale. The material is initially discussed in chronological order. Towards the end of the chapter, however, the focus shifts to an analysis of connections.

Before 1950 and Beyond Architecture: The Fundamental Influence of Anarchist Thought

This chapter traces the development of De Carlo's ideas of participation and the realistic utopia through work developed in specific architectural contexts from the establishment of his independent practice in 1950. It is important, however, to note that important roots of these conceptions can be observed before this period, and outside architecture, in his encounters with the anarchist movement of post-war Italy.⁴ During the Second World War, De Carlo was an active participant in the Italian Resistance to German occupation. At this time, he befriended the writers Elio Vittorini and Italo Calvino, both of whom would

³ Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1972).

⁴ The anarchist movement was mainly represented by the *Federazione Anarchica Italiana* (FAI – Italian Anarchist Federation). De Carlo participated in the first two conferences in which the federation was formed. Francesco Samassa, "A building is not a building is not a building: The anarchitecture of Giancarlo De Carlo," in *Giancarlo De Carlo, Percorsi*, 326.

transform his thinking on the human experience of the city.⁵ It was also during this time that De Carlo first encountered the anarchist movement. John McKean, in his biography of De Carlo, points to the fundamental influence of this movement on his approach to architecture. Key to this was the differentiation between the anarchist and the communist factions emerging from the Italian resistance movement. While the ‘majority decisions’ were binding for the communists, for the anarchists ‘passionately held opposing positions could reach agreement on the basis that minorities felt free to keep arguing their position until they or their opponents had changed their mind’.⁶ Here was a model of a critical participation, never reaching closure.

De Carlo’s ‘political’ commitment to anarchism ended in 1958 when he wrote to the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI) to declare that: ‘From now on I shall seek to express the orientation towards freedom in my life in works rather than in words’.⁷ For Francesco Samassa, this withdrawal from an overtly political ambition facilitated De Carlo’s more focused search for the architectural dimension of anarchist principles. The sense of a living, permanently open and contestable consensus, evident in the above quote from McKean, would later become central to De Carlo’s notion of participation and the realistic utopia. In his conversation with former student Franco Bunčuga, De Carlo stated:

I don’t feel able to say that I am an anarchist. In reality I don’t think anyone can ... anarchism is a horizon you guide yourself towards with the understanding that you’ll never reach it because it moves as you try to get closer. This is its extraordinary strength that protects it from becoming association, party, job or profession, routine, safety, career...⁸

Later in his career, in 1976, De Carlo would describe his notion of participation in strikingly similar terms, as a phenomenon which ‘does not yet exist’ using a formulation which echoed and expanded the realistic utopia:

At this point, one might wonder whether the projections of the architecture of participation that have been described are not reflected on a screen of abstract utopia. And it should be answered that the architecture of participation is a limit situation to which one must strive, even if one is aware that it will never be reached.⁹

⁵ McKean, *Layered Places*, 52.

⁶ McKean, *Layered Places*, 114.

⁷ Giancarlo De Carlo, letter to the FAI 1958 quoted in Samassa, “A building is not a building is not a building,” 336.

⁸ Giancarlo De Carlo and Franco Bunčuga, *Conversazioni su architettura e libertà*, (Milano: Elèuthera, 2014): 75-76, as quoted in, and translated by, Adam Wood, “Giancarlo De Carlo: How to Keep Educational Architecture Human or Creative Anti-Institutionalism,” *Architecture and Education*, <https://architectureandeducation.org/2018/06/28/giancarlo-de-carlo-how-to-keep-educational-architecture-human-or-creative-anti-institutionalism/>

⁹ ‘A questo punto ci si potrebbe domandare se le proiezioni dell’architettura della partecipazione che sono state descritte non si riflettano su uno schermo di utopia astratta. E si dovrebbe rispondere che l’architettura della partecipazione è una

In De Carlo's descriptions, both anarchism and participation take the form of a utopia—a 'horizon' to 'guide yourself towards with the understanding that you'll never reach it'. De Carlo's concepts of participation and the realistic utopia can in this way be understood as attempts to draw the political 'horizon' of anarchism into the specific context of architecture. It is this attempt, leading to the explicit formulation of the terms in 1970 and 1971, which are traced through the remainder of this chapter.

The Formal Experiments of an Antiformalist: The Origins of Critical Practice in De Carlo's Work 1950-1959

The first decade of De Carlo's architectural practice was characterised by a growing critique of modernist orthodoxy and the development of specific positions regarding history, context and the users of buildings, all of which led to his notion of participation as a critical practice. Mirko Zardini credits De Carlo with introducing the theme of participation to 'the Italian debate'.¹⁰ This was not a simple matter of importing ideas from other contexts and applying them in an Italian context. Rather, De Carlo developed his notion of participation through his overlapping activities of collective housing design, urban planning, critical writing and curation of architectural exhibitions. Several different interests, including observing the people inhabiting his buildings and studying the various forms of Italian vernacular architecture, would influence this development. Drawing on the insights from these studies, De Carlo used a series of articles, primarily in *Casabella-continuità*, to develop his position of anti-formalism in the Italian context. Throughout these diverse formats De Carlo began to articulate the need to maintain forms of criticality in architectural practice. To this end, he began to outline various formulations that marked the emergence of a central aspect of the realistic utopia, the balance between seemingly opposed elements.

As noted by the curator of his archives, Francesco Samassa, De Carlo's graduation coincided with enactment of the legislation for the INA Casa program, which launched the construction of public housing for working people on a large scale and, with it, the independent careers of many young architects of De Carlo's generation.¹¹ According to McKean, De Carlo had in fact advised on its formulation, particularly the initiative to involve mainly young and emerging architects to design the projects.¹² When De Carlo established his independent architectural practice in 1950, it was closely aligned to orthodox

situazione limite alla quale si deve tendere, anche se si ha la consapevolezza che non la si raggiungerà mai o - come si suol dire - che la si raggiungerà all'infinito'. Giancarlo De Carlo, "Altri appunti sulla partecipazione (Con riferimento a un settore dell'architettura dove sembrerebbe più ovvia)," *Parametro* 52 (1976) 52.

¹⁰ Zardini, "Crestomazia decarliana," 94.

¹¹ Samassa, "A building is not a building is not a building," 329.

¹² John McKean, *Layered Places*, 16. A complete account and analysis of the program is provided in Stephanie Pilat, *Reconstructing Italy: the Ina-Casa Neighborhoods of the Postwar Era* (London: Routledge, 2016).

modernist principles. His first project was for a public housing project at Sesto San Giovanni, on the periphery of Milan, in 1950. The project comes closest to the Italian rationalist tradition and the principles of international modernism, being described by Joseph Rykwert as ‘a perfect example for one of those worthy ‘30s volumes like *The Modern Flat* or *Wohnung für Existenzminimum*’.¹³ The building is a linear block of five identical levels of ten units, each with balconies to the south and offset access galleries to the north.

De Carlo reported being shocked to observe the disconnection between his prescriptive design and the ways in which the people who lived in it actually used it (Figure 2.1). According to his own account, he spent a morning sitting in a cafe across from his newly-occupied building, observing the activity of the people who now lived there.

I suffered the violence with which they attacked it so as to turn it into their home; and I experienced the imprecision of my calculations. The sunlit balconies were filled with drying laundry, and the people were all on the north side, on the access galleries. Before every door there were chairs so that they could all participate as actors and audience in the spectacle which they presented themselves, and the spectacle of the street ... So I understood how faulty my premises were, in spite of their apparently rationalist foundation. Orientation is important and so is green space and light and privacy, but what matters above all is to see each other, to chat, to be together. Communication counts most.¹⁴

As has been noted by Zucchi and others, this was an important moment in De Carlo’s fundamental questioning of the prevalent dogmas of architecture (rationalism, the modern movement and the international style), which would crystallise in his arguments in “*Il pubblico*”.¹⁵ The experience can be seen to initiate De Carlo’s questioning of ways in which architecture relates to the people who actually use it. It prompted him to focus on ‘the real protagonist of architecture’—its users—and represented the beginning of his search for the appropriate architectural means with which to engage them and which eventually led him to the architecture of participation.

¹³ Joseph Rykwert, “The progress of an Italian architect,” *Architecture and Building* 3 (1959): 278.

¹⁴ Giancarlo De Carlo, quoted in Rykwert, “The progress of an Italian architect,” 278.

¹⁵ Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 16.



Figure 2.1. Residents of De Carlo's apartments at Sesto San Giovanni dry their washing and struggle to speak to each other from the 'sunlit balconies' designed according to rationalist principles. Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, "Architecture and Human Needs," lecture recorded by Monica Pidgeon, London, 1994. <https://www.pidgeondigital.com/talks/architecture-human-needs/> accessed 20.09.2019.

The Triennali di Milano of 1951 and 1954 gave De Carlo an important platform through which to develop this search. For the IXth Triennale (1951), he, and colleagues Giuseppe Samonà and others from the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IUAV), curated and designed an exhibition of 'Spontaneous Architecture'. The exhibition gathered together diverse forms of vernacular architecture from across Italy and analysed their forms in terms of the specific cultural, material, climatic and topographical factors which had conditioned them.¹⁶ This survey provided De Carlo an opportunity to study closely the relationship between people and their built environment as it had developed without the 'academic' intervention of a 'specialist' architect.¹⁷ For the Xth Triennale (1954) on Urbanism, the

¹⁶ Benedict Zucchi draws the connection between De Carlo's involvement in the exhibition and the formal distinction between the rationalism of Sesto San Giovanni and the 'simulation of slow growth' of his next housing scheme at Bavena. Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 17-19.

¹⁷ De Carlo developed a critique of 'academicism' in architecture and 'specialisation' in human activity in general. For him, they enabled a condition of distance and separation from everyday realities and were responsible for many of architecture's failures. For a summary of his position see Zardini, "Crestomazia decarliana," 94.

tone became more openly critical of current modes of urban planning and indicated a developing interest in more direct participation of the public in the formation of city form. Here De Carlo was collaborating with his friend, the sociologist Carlo Doglio. The two had met in the anarchist movement shortly after the war and, while De Carlo had introduced Doglio to the field of urban planning, it was Doglio who first framed the clear need for greater public participation in reformed city planning.¹⁸

The collaboration with Doglio and the influential architect, urbanist, and educator Ludovico Quaroni marked the emergence of a more strident stance against positivist modernism and can be clearly connected to the critiques that generated the formulation of participation, particularly in its ridicule of the notion of ‘universal man’.¹⁹ This critique is made explicit in a film De Carlo produced with others for the exhibition, *Una lezione d’urbanistica* (A lesson in urbanism), which lampooned the prevailing notion of scientifically deduced and supposedly infallible urban prescriptions for people to be squeezed through.²⁰ In the film, an expert, ‘Professor C’, bypasses sentimental notions of ‘intuition and experience’ to quantify (with a stethoscope and clipboard) the maladies of the urban environment. Once the plan is in place, a bewildered user tries to navigate the convoluted series of signs and barricades, failing utterly. The mismatch between plan and reality prompts no critical reflection on the part of Professor C, who says: ‘Impossible. No, the calculations can’t be wrong. If anything, what’s wrong is ... the man’.²¹ There is a clear echo of De Carlo’s earlier reflection on Sesto San Giovanni. He is making fun of his own presumptions and pointing to the horror of such assumptions becoming a universal dogma applied at the scale of whole cities. In the film, Professor C eventually intervenes, forcing the user to comply with his plan, becoming a caricature dictator who sets the beat to which the user must march through his plan until he collapses.

Beyond this critique, De Carlo and his collaborators hoped to propose an alternative model of urban planning based not on specialisation but on cross-disciplinary collaboration. Here, De Carlo introduced the idea of collective participation of the actual users and inhabitants:

¹⁸ Stefania Proli, “Carlo Doglio (1914-1995) and the Theory and Practice of Slingshot Planning,” *Planning Perspectives* 32 (2017): 536.

¹⁹ Ludovico Quaroni was an important figure in the post-war, Italian architectural and urban debates in which De Carlo was also a participant.

²⁰ Wood, “How to Keep Educational Architecture Human .?”

²¹ Professor C in Giancarlo De Carlo, “Una lezione d’urbanistica,” 1954. Adam Wood has provided English subtitles for a section of the film which can be seen here: <https://vimeo.com/277254686>. Accessed 25.06.2018.

in order for the two aspects of urbanism, research and intervention to produce tangible effects and not worsen the damage that one is seeking to remedy, it is necessary that this effort be a collaboration between all those forces that can make an effective contribution: the forces of specialist knowledge that can provide various useful perspectives on the problem, and above all the anonymous forces of society, the real protagonists of human events. The aim of urban planning is to improve their condition and is an aim which cannot be realized without their consensus and participation.²²

Although the process is not yet specified, his call for collaboration of ‘specialist knowledge’ with ‘the anonymous forces of society, the real protagonists of human events’, pre-empted his work on participation of the late sixties and early seventies.²³ Throughout the 1950s however De Carlo’s interest in process remained limited to its expression in architectural form. In Baveno (1951) another project of the INA Casa, the form is a significant departure from San Giovanni, built only a year prior. Both Zucchi and McKean draw the connection between De Carlo’s involvement in the Spontaneous Architecture exhibition and the design of Baveno.²⁴ The design also marks the beginning of De Carlo’s formal search for ‘simulation of slow growth’, an attempt to produce a ready-made version of the kind of gradual accretion of self-made architecture featured in the IXth Triennale.²⁵ De Carlo attempted to implement a similar approach of staggered, clustered forms at a larger scale in his scheme to restructure the Spine Bianche district of Matera in 1954. The competition was intended to replace an existing neighbourhood with modern housing blocks. De Carlo did not question the approach of total demolition, describing the existing housing as ‘decrepit or even lethal from a hygienic point of view’.²⁶ He did, however, seek to understand and draw from the existing condition in his new scheme, aiming ‘to preserve in a sensitive spatial composition the vital characteristics of those groups of housing that the new neighbourhood was to substitute’.²⁷

Although De Carlo’s urban scheme was unsuccessful, he was invited by the winner, Carlo Aymonino, to design one of the linear blocks of his scheme, completed in 1957. While Aymonino’s masterplan required De Carlo to return to a linear block form, it was now radically different from Sesto San Giovanni. In a departure from the uniformity of units at Sesto San Giovanni, each level has distinct spatial qualities: the ground floor consists of a series of small shops, each with basement storage below, and is surrounded by

²² Giancarlo De Carlo, “La sezione urbanistica alla X Triennale,” *Vetroflex* (June 1955): 1. Translated and quoted in Zucchi: *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 48.

²³ As discussed in Chapter 1, however, by that stage consensus is no longer a given of participation, with conflict being prioritised and consensus being positioned as only provisional.

²⁴ Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 16; McKean, *Layered Places*, 18.

²⁵ The phrase is used by Zucchi as the title for his discussion of the Urbino colleges. Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 75-103.

²⁶ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Il risultato di un concorso,” *Casabella Continuità* 231 (September 1959): 24. Translation by Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 19.

²⁷ De Carlo, “Il risultato di un concorso,” 24.

a public colonnade facing the new square. Above this are two levels of distinct apartment types. The middle floor faces outwards with balconies to both sides. The upper floor is internal and faces the sky with central courtyards. The building also takes the corners on each floor as opportunities to provide alternative types with central courtyards (Figure 2.2).

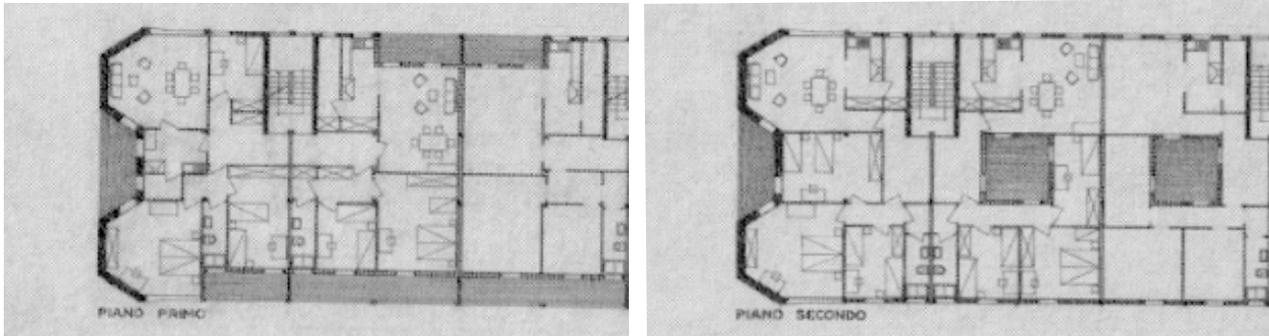


Figure 2.2. Giancarlo De Carlo: Matera (1957), first and second floors showing the external balcony type and the internal courtyard type. Source: Francesco Samassa, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Inventario Analitico dell'Archivio*, (Milan: Il Poligrafo, 2004) 102.

This provision through design of measured diversity and structured, contextually appropriate opportunities for social life can be seen as a response to De Carlo's moment of self-criticism in the cafe across from San Giovanni. According to McKean, he was attempting to do something more than respond to the emerging context and the need for collective encounter: he also wanted to provide for their desires, and to draw the symbolism of the palace into the design of social housing (Figure 2.3 below):

It was my belief that the future inhabitants were in desperate admiration of the bishop's residence, on top of the hill, just over their heads, because its form was talking of permanence, identity, security; its language was describing a specific character: local and universal, secret and understandable. So, I made a palace: with an arcade, a piano nobile, mansards at the top around small patios, a large protective roof visible from far.²⁸

²⁸ Giancarlo De Carlo, quoted in McKean, *Layered Places*, 20. McKean has drawn the quote from Lamberto Rossi, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Architetture* (Milan: Mondadori, 1988).



Figure 2.3. Social housing as palace: Spine Bianche, Matera (1957). Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, “Architecture and Human Needs.”

De Carlo presented the completed building at the 1959 meeting of CIAM (*Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne* – International Congress of Modern Architecture) in Otterlo. His design was scrutinised for its deviance from highly prescriptive formal criteria. Clearly, at this stage De Carlo was interested in how to adapt architecture to suit its inhabitants; however, André Wogenscky, a former assistant to Le Corbusier, advised him to do the opposite:

There is no doubt that you have a difficult task here, for these people have not received an education into the new plastic relationships of our epoch, and do not understand the poetry of modern space and movement. But you must talk to them about these concepts which are a real result of the plastic of our time. You must, if you hope to lead them to the future, introduce this new plastic expression, and fight to make it clear and understandable to them.²⁹

De Carlo was not alone in facing these criticisms. He was part of the Italian delegation which, as the historian Manfredo Tafuri describes, was ‘rudely attacked’ for deviating from orthodox modernist principles:

²⁹ André Wogenscky, “Discussion. Giancarlo De Carlo, Milano Italia, Shops and Apartment Buildings in Matera/South Italy,” in *CIAM 59 in Otterlo*, eds Oscar Newman and Jürgen Joedicke (London: Alec Tirani, 1961), 90.

Only De Carlo succeeded in countering the accusations of “deviance” by reaffirming the freedom from prejudice that characterised his commitment to antiformalism - one of the motives that had led him to make a noisy exit from Casabella’s group of directors - and by adhering to the work and the initiatives of Team X.³⁰

The quote from Tafuri makes clear that despite their conflation at CIAM, De Carlo held a distinctive position amongst his compatriots on formal questions, which can be read clearly in the debates conducted through the journal *Casabella-continuità*. Ernesto Nathan Rogers, the editor-in-chief, was a major figure in the Italian architecture scene and had assisted De Carlo in his early career (Fig.2.4).³¹ In 1953, Rogers had invited De Carlo to join both the Italian CIAM committee and the editorial board of *Casabella-continuità* which from the outset also included Vittorio Gregotti and Marco Zanuso.³² De Carlo later noted the respect he had for Rogers, as well as their specific differences of opinion.³³ While they shared a common dissatisfaction with modernism’s ‘factitiousness’, they strongly diverged as to the way forward. In contrast to his own search for an architectural rigour separate from formalism and directed towards addressing social needs, De Carlo saw Rogers’ promotion of *continuità* (continuity) as overly formalistic and inflexible, seeking an ‘ecumenical’ position for modernism by combining it with earlier ‘academic’ tendencies. De Carlo’s primary critique of Rogers and *Casabella* rested on their focus on formal and stylistic concerns—the objects of architecture—and the indulgence in what he saw as a tendency to make architecture overly academic and drew architecture away from what De Carlo saw as the primary mission of architecture: to engage with and draw from social reality. The ‘noisy exit’ to which Tafuri referred was a public split between De Carlo and Rogers four year later regarding, amongst other things, their differing attitudes towards the very relationship between history and modernism which had been used to group them in Otterlo.³⁴ De Carlo had for many years been a vocal opponent of adopting a particular formal vocabulary, such as the international style, and applying it unilaterally in all situations. He was an equally strong opponent of the emerging historicism in Italy which, encouraged by Rogers, would eventually mature as the *Tendenza*.

³⁰ Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, trans. Jessica Levine (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 58.

³¹ Rogers has been positioned as a transitional figure in numerous historical accounts. Jorge Otero-Pailos counts Rogers as one of the key figures in the introduction of phenomenology into architecture, who helped to form what he calls the ‘anti-avant-garde’. Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Architecture's Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). In the historical accounts of Team 10, he is identified as a bridge between the CIAM and Team 10.

³² Alberto Termino, “From the ‘Aesthetic of number’ to the ‘Great number’: Giancarlo De Carlo and Aldo van Eyck between Order and Contradiction,” *Histories of Postwar Architecture*, 2, no. 5 (2019): 114.

³³ Giancarlo De Carlo and Yasuo Watanabe, “Up to Now and from Now on,” interview in *Space Design* 87/07 (1987): 46.

³⁴ De Carlo explains the distinctions in his public ‘clarification’ of the reasons for his withdrawal, published and commented upon by Rogers. Giancarlo De Carlo, “Una precisazione,” *Casabella continuità* 214 (1957): 1-3.



Figure 2.4. Rogers and De Carlo at a debate in Milan 1949. Source: Samassa, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Inventario Analitico dell'Archivio*, 17.

De Carlo's objections to this movement highlight the importance for him of maintaining a critical viewpoint towards the systems and structure of power in which architecture operates. In a previous article for *Casabella continuità*, De Carlo equates the shocking ingenuity of those who stopped drawing columns with those who now started drawing them again. He sees both cases as a kind of 'sheep in wolf's clothing', seemingly daring yet utterly passive in the face of established powers.³⁵ He aligns the 'abstract and sterile' formalisms of both the international style and the 'young men of the columns'. Both leave the utility of their symbols for 'bureaucracies, dictators and bankers' untroubled. De Carlo rejects any attempt at universal solutions to direct the energy of architecture towards the real problems facing it:

the problems of contemporary architecture [...] concern the common man who is always different, who needs houses, schools, public buildings, streets, squares, neighbourhoods, etc., always different for every environment, for every situation, for every circumstance. These problems are not solved by a miracle, by resurrecting old mummified languages. They are confronted by subjecting all the architectural facts that preceded us to a rigorous and profound criticism; finding the means to better understand and participate in the needs of the people for whom we want to work.³⁶

³⁵ '[S]otto la pelle di lupo delle dichiarazioni più dogmatiche ancora goffamente nasconde la pecora belante dell'ecllettismo.' Giancarlo De Carlo, "Problemi concreti per i giovani delle colonne," *Casabella continuità* 204 (1955): 83.

³⁶ 'Invece i problemi dell'architettura contemporanea [non hanno nulla a che fare con l'Uomo Universale.] Riguardano l'uomo comune e sempre diverso_ che ha bisogno di case, scuole, edifici pubblici, strade, piazze, quartieri ecc., sempre diversi per ogni ambiente, per ogni situazione, per ogni circostanza. Questi problemi non si risolvono per un miracolo, risuscitando vecchi linguaggi mummificati. Si affrontano sottoponendo ad una critica rigorosa e profonda tutti i fatti

Here, perhaps, is a prefiguration of what would later become a central aspect of the realistic utopia. While speaking only of critiquing previous forms of architecture, De Carlo sets up an important relationship between a refocus on the everyday needs of people and the critique of architecture. The need for balance implicit in the pairing of reality and utopia is also one which can be observed, through different pairings, in De Carlo's particular positions on form developed in the 50s. In an article for *Casabella* in 1959, he describes one of the key objectives of his original Matera plan as the development of a formal language capable of maintaining a balance between modernism and tradition 'equally far from a folkloric formalism and an abstract technical formalism'.³⁷ Throughout the 1950s, De Carlo's search revolved around the relationship between architectural form and the people who would inhabit it. It was enacted by questioning the limitations of formalism—modernist or historicist—while simultaneously exploring form as a means of housing people in the broadest sense, able to accommodate the richness and complexity of their collective social lives and individual desires. This required a heightened criticality on the part of the architect. Taken together, these divergent directions provided a foundation for De Carlo's reformulation of the practice of architecture, which he would eventually call the 'architecture of participation'. Over the next decade, De Carlo would develop these ideas in an increasingly international context and along lines which begin to prefigure the critical potential of the realistic utopia.

Twinphenomena and the Utopia of the Present: The Influence of Team 10

The confrontations and cross-pollination of ideas enabled by the platform of Team 10 allowed De Carlo's notion of participation to move from the rather vague and disconnected ideas embedded in his work of the 50s to the much more synthesised position he had established by the end of the 60s.³⁸ At the time, De Carlo was seeking to expand his intellectual horizons beyond the Italian context and, in particular, the influence of Ernesto Nathan Rogers.³⁹ For De Carlo, Team 10's diverse moves collectively shifted

architettonici che ci hanno preceduto; trovando i mezzi per capire meglio ed essere partecipi dei bisogni della gente per la quale vogliamo lavorare, precisando il senso del nostro mestiere di architetti nella società in cui viviamo.' De Carlo, "Problemi concreti per i giovani delle colonne," 83.

³⁷ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Il risultato di un concorso," *Casabella Continuità* 231 (September 1959): 24.

³⁸ Accounts differ on when Team 10 'formed' and when De Carlo 'joined'. Otterlo marks the point from which he was in regular contact with the group. Alison Smithson counts De Carlo as one who 'came later'. Alison Smithson, *The Emergence of Team 10 out of C.I.A.M.* (London: Architectural Association, 1982), 4. De Carlo's version is that, while he was not involved in CIAM X Debrovnik, the *real* formation of Team 10 can be traced to the discussions at a preparatory meeting for CIAM X held at La Sarraz attended by a group of younger participants who were prevented from participating in the main conference. Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 160.

³⁹ In his 'clarifying' open letter explaining his departure from *Casabella-continuità*, De Carlo outlined a number of ways in which he was seeking an intellectual climate far removed from the 'personal organ' of Rogers' publication: "Today is the time for choices and clarification, that is, for an open and continuous debate from which the conditions for coordinated action are born. A single voice, however intelligent and acute, cannot summarise and compose the alternatives of this process'. (Oggi è il momento - come si diceva - delle scelte e della chiarificazione, ovverosia di un dibattito aperto e continuo dal quale nascono le condizioni per un'azione coordinata. Non può una sola voce, per quanto intelligente e acuta, riassumere e

architectural discourse from the production of objects to the framing of critical processes in relation to society: ‘We rejected the view that the aim of architecture was producing objects, instead we saw architecture’s fundamental job as setting off transformational processes of the physical environment, ones that would be capable of contributing to the improvement of the human condition’.⁴⁰ This pluralistic and confrontational environment provided De Carlo with a model for maintaining complexity in which different architectural responses to specific contexts could communicate without the need to compress them into a single set of principles.⁴¹ In this context, De Carlo began to extend his interest to encompass architecture’s relationship with society more broadly, and to explore possible means by which architecture could be an instigator of social change. In this way, the concepts collectively understood in this thesis as the realistic utopia became more visible.

While the plurality of Team 10’s practices and positions make any attempt to define a strict set of objectives reductive, it can be said that making modern architecture more responsive to its users was of interest to many of those in its orbit. Different aspects of what De Carlo would incorporate under the theme of ‘participation’ were of interest to different members of the group. Ralph Erskine is perhaps the other Team 10 figure most closely associated with the early experiments in participation. An English architect based in Sweden, Erskine had begun to work with participatory methods as early as 1948 in his project for the enlargement of a pulp-mill company town, Gärstrike-Hammarby. Erskine hosted coffee meetings with ‘all concerned within the village’ to understand their requirements prior to formulating their proposals, which were presented back to the participants in similar informal settings for discussion.⁴² In contrast to De Carlo, Erskine was much more interested in building solid consensus than opening up conflicts and, while he predicated his involvement on close and ongoing collaboration with the residents, he viewed the relationship with his financial client, the housing authority, as equally important.⁴³

comporre le alternative di questo processo) De Carlo, *Una precisazione*. 3. From the outset, De Carlo’s involvement in Team 10 was characterised by such a contest of opinion. It was not only the ‘old guard’ of modernism who lambasted De Carlo over Matera’s apparent historicism; Britt Eversole quotes Alison Smithson describing how the Team 10 themselves ‘hammered him into the ground’. Eversole, “Reputations,” 110.

⁴⁰ De Carlo, interview with Franco Buncuga, *Conversazioni su architettura e libertà*, 134-135. Translated and quoted by Adam Wood: <https://architectureandeducation.org/2017/07/08/an-anarchic-take-on-architecture-space-and-education-giancarlo-de-carlo-and-franco-buncuga-conversazioni-su-architettura-e-liberta/> Accessed 28.06.2018

⁴¹ ‘This means rejecting internationalism, of the kind based on the mirage of an abstract universal language, to provoke a new plan of international (but not cosmopolitan) understanding where all the experiences bear the precise sign of the different realities in which they have matured confront and integrate.’ (Significa rifiutare l'internazionalismo \ di maniera fondato sul miraggio di un linguaggio universale astratto, per provocare un nuovo piano di intesa internazionale (ma non cosmopolita) dove tutte le esperienze che portano il segno preciso delle diverse realtà in cui sono maturate si confrontano e si integrano.) De Carlo, *Una precisazione*, 2.

⁴² Peter Collymore, *The Architecture of Ralph Erskine* (London: Academy Editions, 1994), 13.

⁴³ The differing approaches to dealing with the financial client, and the resulting controversies, can be read through a comparison of the Erskine’s project for the Bykker community against De Carlo’s project in Matteotti. The latter project will be discussed in Chapter 3.

For architecture scholar Giovanni Damiani, writing on the specific role of participation in Team 10 discourse: 'Seeking to supersede form was a way for these architects to pursue and carry forward the ethical force and power of renewal that were originally part of the Modern Movement and were eventually lost when it turned into the International Style'.⁴⁴ In some respects, this 'ethical force' has parallels with utopia, both being aspects of the modern movement which Team 10 members were originally seeking to expand and, later, simply to preserve. A complex notion of utopia pervades the discourse of this diverse group, a fact underlined by the subtitling of the definitive historical work on their contribution, 'In Search of a Utopia of the Present' in which Damiani's contribution appears. This itself is a reference to Alison Smithson's preface to the 1968 'team 10 primer':

This new beginning, and the long build up that followed, has been concerned with inducing, as it were injecting into the bloodstream of the architect an understanding and a feeling for the patterns, the aspirations, the artefacts, the tools ...of present day society, so that he can as a natural thing build towards that society's realization of itself.

In this sense Team 10 is Utopian, but Utopian about the present. Thus their aim is not to theorise but to build, for only through construction can a Utopia of the present be realized.⁴⁵

While more generalised and less overtly radical than De Carlo's later formulation of the realistic utopia, this clearly originates in a shared perspective on the agency of architecture. In Smithson's formulation, utopia is contested but positive if it is directed towards contemporary social realities. The temporal situation of 'the present' is particularly interesting as the vital midpoint between what their Team 10 colleague, Aldo van Eyck, saw as antiquarians' sentimentality towards the past and technocrats' reciprocal sentimentality towards the future.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, van Eyck spoke of the 'realism' of Team 10, 'which has as much utopianism in it as society can absorb'.⁴⁷

The ideas of De Carlo and van Eyck intersected at many points, including a shared interest in vernacular forms of architecture and a central concern with the question of how architecture could deal with the 20th century problem of 'the greater number'.⁴⁸ According to McKean, van Eyck described De Carlo as a 'master of paradox' and I will argue that an interest in paradox connected the two.⁴⁹ De Carlo's

⁴⁴ Giovanni Damiani, "Anarchy is not Disorder: Reflections on Participation and Education," in *Team 10: 1953-81, In Search of a Utopia of the Present*, eds. Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel (Rotterdam: NAI, 2005), 287.

⁴⁵ Alison Smithson, "The Aim of Team 10," in *Team 10 Primer*, ed. Alison Smithson (London: Studio Vista, 1968), 3.

⁴⁶ McKean, *Layered Places*, 12.

⁴⁷ Aldo van Eyck, '1966', *Team 10 Primer*, 15.

⁴⁸ A comprehensive account of the synergies and differences between the two figures is provided by Termino, "From the 'Aesthetic of Number' to the 'Great Number,'" 113-138.

⁴⁹ McKean, *Layered Places*, 6.

conception of the realistic utopia, with its inherent tension and drive to locate nuance between polarities, can be related to van Eyck's own notion of 'twinphenomena'. For van Eyck, a key task of architecture and urbanism was to find a way to hold together these seemingly opposing elements, which co-exist in a series of reciprocal relationships: 'part-whole, unity-diversity, large-small, many-few, as well as others equally significant - inside-outside, open-closed, mass-space, change-constancy, motion-rest, individual collective'.⁵⁰ He argued that architecture and urbanism had split each of these into 'irreconcilable polarities', and it was now their task to create 'defined in-between places which induce simultaneous awareness of what is significant on either side'. More than a simple spatial metaphor, the notion of in-between 'provides the common ground where conflicting polarities can again become twinphenomena'.⁵¹ In this way, balance can be restored to the 'framing' of human activity: 'Right-size will flower as soon as the mild wheels of reciprocity start working - in the climate of relativity, in the landscape of twinphenomena'.⁵² The realistic utopia can be understood in very similar terms: 'reality' and 'utopia', when split into 'irreconcilable polarities', do indeed become 'meaningless absolutes'. Pure reality offers no possibility for critique, change or progression. Pure utopia offers no possibility of enactment. In De Carlo's formulation, it is only by locating a practice 'in between' these absolutes that the realistic utopia in architecture is able to operate in relation to society. The conjunction of reality and utopia was, however, not unique to De Carlo. It had already been in place in the Italian context for some time, as is discussed below.

⁵⁰ Aldo van Eyck, "Dutch Forum on Children's Home," *Team 10 Primer*, 100.

⁵¹ Van Eyck, "Dutch Forum on Children's Home," 104.

⁵² Aldo van Eyck, 1962, quoted in Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck: The Shape of Relativity* (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 1998), 458.

Conflicting Utopias of Reality in Italy

In the early 60s, although De Carlo had very conspicuously left the orbit of Rogers prior to his close association with Team 10, his former mentor was framing his own conception of utopia qualified by reality. Rogers outlined the 'utopia of reality' in an editorial in *Casabella Continuità* in 1962.⁵³ The sentiment conveyed in the text is similar to that articulated by Team 10 and, later, De Carlo himself. Here, utopia is to be grounded in the actualities of the present rather than conceptualised as a frivolous escape. Rogers wanted to activate the concept of utopia as a kind of 'concrete thinking towards a better society ... in a world built with real media for real purposes.'⁵⁴ According to Gregotti, the 'utopia of reality' 'was an important and subtle idea which combined the two dialectical elements of Italian architectural culture: the striving through direct contact with the concrete experience of national reality, and the impetus toward a radical movement, toward experimental research'.⁵⁵ This description could equally well apply to De Carlo's later formulations of the realistic utopia.

Conflicting interpretations of both 'utopia' and 'reality' run through the ideological skirmishes in which De Carlo had engaged in the Italian context. In his open letter of resignation from *Casabella-continuità* five years prior, De Carlo had sought to contrast his own 'realist' position with the 'utopian' view he attributed to his unnamed opponents at the magazine. He framed this as a choice:

We must choose between the aimless idealistic impulses of the avant-garde and the development of a method grounded in reality, between coteries of the initiated and society itself, between utopia and real transformations in the world, between fashion and tradition, between drawing-board architecture and a built work that lives each passing day and is consumed daily by people's lives.⁵⁶

For De Carlo at that time, utopia was a kind of insult associated with the elitist, formalist and academic tendencies in architecture. By calling for architects to choose between the ineffectual utopias of 'drawing board architecture' and engaging in 'real transformations in the world' through a 'method grounded in reality', he appears to have seen the two attributes as irreconcilable. Rogers' concept of the utopia of reality would have been well-known to De Carlo, and it is hard to maintain that it would have had no

⁵³ Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Utopia della realtà," *Casabella continuità*, 259 (1962). 1-2.

⁵⁴ Rogers, "Utopia della realtà," 1, translated and quoted in Silvia Malcovati, "The Utopia of Reality. Realisms in Architecture between Ideology and Phenomenology," *Serbian Architectural Journal* 6, no. 2 (2014): 146-65.

⁵⁵ Vittorio Gregotti, *New Directions in Italian Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 80.

⁵⁶ 'E' necessario scegliere tra il procedere per impulsi idealistici e senza bersagli delle avanguardie e la costruzione di un metodo fondata sulla conoscenza della realtà, tra gli ambienti degli iniziati e la società, tra l'utopia e le reali trasformazioni del mondo, tra la moda e il costume, tra la carta disegnata e le cose costruite che vivono nei giorni che passano e con la gente che le consuma.' De Carlo, "Una precisazione" 2.

influence on his own formulation of the realistic utopia almost a decade later. In the latter formulation, the oppositional terms are joined: images produced by ‘drawing board architecture’ can stimulate ‘real transformations in the world’. This is enabled by reframing utopia itself as a method grounded in reality.

Differing notions of reality are key to understanding De Carlo’s particular position here. One of the assumed targets of De Carlo’s critiques was his fellow Milanese architect Aldo Rossi, who had joined *Casabella-continuità* as a regular writer in 1955 and would join the editorial team in 1959.⁵⁷ Like De Carlo, Rossi rejected ‘abstract’ impositions in favour of forms that were generated from their specific context: ‘When a project or a form is not utopian or abstract but evolves from the specific problems of the city it persists’.⁵⁸ It is in their understanding of reality that the most relevant distinction can be made, between a reality primarily understood in terms of artefacts (Rossi) and one understood in terms of relationships (De Carlo).⁵⁹

The notion of reality as complex relationality has its roots in De Carlo’s involvement in reformulating notions of urbanism in Italy in the early 1960s. Gregotti credits De Carlo with organising the meeting ‘in 1962 on the “new dimensions of the city,” which was fundamental for establishing new concepts of the “city-region” and “city-territory”’.⁶⁰ These concepts concerned the interrelationship between the city and its surroundings and formed the basis of De Carlo’s unrealised Piano Intercomunale de Milano (PIM), described by Gregotti as ‘the most complex and articulate experiment’ in enacting the theory.⁶¹ While De Carlo was pursuing this agenda of interrelationship, Rossi was developing his antithetical notion of the autonomous urban artefact.⁶² Against the notion of autonomy, De Carlo’s later work on participation can be understood as a means to continue to develop a theory of interrelationship beyond the urbanistic metaphor of the ‘city-territory’ to draw in multiple contexts: ‘In a situation of collective participation, the consideration of the network of interrelations which are established between every new project and

⁵⁷ McKean attributes De Carlo’s departure to Rossi’s arrival: McKean, *Layered Places*, 12. A later instance of conflict between the two regarding the same theme of autonomy versus relationality is described by Paola Nicolini, “Beyond the Failure: Notes on the XIVth Triennale,” *Log*, 13/14 (2008): 91-93. The long running antipathy between De Carlo and Rossi was summarised by De Carlo following Rossi’s premature death: ‘I hated his way of thinking and doing architecture, and he hated mine. We have been in conflict first declared and then tacit, because implicit, from the sixties onwards. For those who wanted to realize it we professed two opposite and irreconcilable architectural positions’ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Short article on the occasion of the death of Aldo Rossi, Milano, 5 settembre 1997.” *Giancarlo De Carlo Percorsi*, 456.

⁵⁸ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (New York: IAUS, 1982), 18. Originally published as Aldo Rossi, *L’architettura della città* (Padova: Marsilio 1966).

⁵⁹ Silvia Malcovati connects the influence of Rogers’ ‘Utopia of reality’ and the emerging ideas of realism and rationalism in the work of Aldo Rossi and the *tendenza* to the Soviet notion of Realism, which was featured in the pages of *Casabella* during Rossi’s period as editor. Malcovati, “The Utopia of Reality”.

⁶⁰ Gregotti, *New Directions*, 79. See also Carlo Aymonino, *La città-territorio* (Bari: Leonardo Da Vinci, 1964).

⁶¹ Gregotti, *New Directions*, 79.

⁶² Pier Vittorio Aureli recounts Rossi’s contribution as a ‘dissident’ tutor at an advanced course on urbanism in Arezzo in 1963 organised by the Olivetti Foundation. Here: ‘Against the mystification of the city-territory - which was put forward in Arezzo by Tafuri and endorsed by Quaroni and De Carlo - Rossi insisted on the concreteness of the urban artefact, of the architecture of the city, as the most relevant and precise instrument of urban analysis and design’. Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism* (New York: The Temple Hoyne Buell Center, Columbia University, 2008), 62.

the context to which it is destined become fundamental'.⁶³ While Rossi saw it as necessary to strongly demarcate the boundaries of architecture as object in order to critically assert itself, De Carlo was driving in the opposite direction, seeking to reconnect architecture with the vast and complex set of variables in which it intervenes.⁶⁴ This distinction is important in understanding how De Carlo moved from opposing utopia to seeing it as a viable tool, which is apparent in his work for the city of Urbino.

Urbino: Form as 'Resistant' Utopia

Through this notion of attending to architecture's complex interrelationships, De Carlo began at this time to formulate a more positive notion of utopia. In 1966 he published *Urbino: la storia di una città e il piano della sua evoluzione urbanistica* (Urbino: the history of a city and the plan for its urbanistic evolution). This represented the culmination of the work he had been doing since 1958 for the Municipality and the University of Urbino.⁶⁵ Importantly, as the title indicates, the book is both a history and a plan: it analyses an existing city and proposes interventions. De Carlo notes in his introduction that 'direct contact with people from many walks of life and widely differing social backgrounds enhanced the representative quality of the Plan, by furthering constant debate and eliciting intellectual involvement when the plan was under review'.⁶⁶ So while not an attempt at participation in any formal sense, in taking 'the goals of the community' as its principal aim, the plan for Urbino can be seen as an important precedent for his later concept.⁶⁷

De Carlo's work in Urbino also develops his idea of the image as a means to 'visualise' the consequences of change and, in so doing, stimulate further iterative change through feedback. The plan itself is positioned as an active contributor to change: 'The Plan reveals the limits within which the political, administrative, and technical policy will be made [...] At the same time it shows what the consequences of the choice will be in the physical pattern'.⁶⁸ While not intended to be a critical operation in this context, this foreshadows De Carlo's later ideas about 'revealing limits' of the structures of society and providing 'concrete images' of what the world would look like if these structures were differently organised. A central question for the plan was: '[C]an an ancient form retain its significance in the face of radical changes in the organisational structure of the city?'.⁶⁹ This question prompts De Carlo to describe the

⁶³ Giancarlo De Carlo, "How/Why to Build School Buildings," *Harvard Educational Review* .4 (1969): 23.

⁶⁴ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 98.

⁶⁵ Giancarlo De Carlo, *Urbino: la storia di una città e il piano della sua evoluzione urbanistica* (Padova: Marsilio, 1966). This work appeared in the same year and by the same publisher as Rossi, *L'architettura della città* op.cit.

⁶⁶ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 247.

⁶⁷ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 247.

⁶⁸ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 254.

⁶⁹ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 257.

complex dialectical relationship of transformation through ‘feedback’, which would later be framed in “Il pubblico” as ‘Architecture is the material cause of the context in which it is placed’, and in *An Architecture of Participation*’ as ‘the realistic Utopia’:

The form, however can influence the context in which it finds itself: it can stimulate new organizational requirements, and suggest the image of new functions; it can feed back to the organizational structures and to the functions modifying the context and opening again the problem of its solution with new forms.⁷⁰

While in the realistic utopia De Carlo is speaking primarily of images enacting this iterative process of proposition and critique, here he connects this process to built form. He goes on to link this characteristic of form with a useful type of utopia. The plan for Urbino is, in some ways, already a utopia, an impossible horizon to strive towards.⁷¹ De Carlo claims that the plan for Urbino ‘does not aim to create new functions, or to replace or destroy those already in existence, as this would mean exceeding its specific attributions’.⁷² Rather than simply preserving or replacing forms, it intends to ‘give the artistic treasures and the natural beauty a social role and context’.⁷³ Here, the architect is reworking form to provide new content and allow new functioning. While the dialectic of the realistic utopia is between propositional forms and an evolving society, the dialectic described in very similar terms here is between ancient form and new use. The premise is that a form can be so potent that it transcends its original use. For De Carlo, this potency does not suggest autonomy but, rather, an intense interaction with the social context, as ‘organizational structure’. The transcendence of function is only significant in its capacity to inspire new functions, even functions as yet unknown. De Carlo goes on to note this quality explicitly in relation to ‘Utopia’:

This happens when the forms envisage in themselves a future state; one might say, when they open up a vision of Utopia - and the more forceful the projection, the more inspired and sudden is the advance. Then forms are “resistant”.⁷⁴

De Carlo produces a shift in what is usually understood by utopia by allowing a utopian character for actually existing forms, forms which did indeed evolve from the specific problems of the city. However, it is the utopian quality of forms to continue to stimulate the social context that keeps them alive: ‘In

⁷⁰ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 256.

⁷¹ While De Carlo states that ‘there is not the slightest chance’ that the proposals would be implemented given the scarcity of funding available, he goes on: ‘The Plan, however, has not reduced its aims because any such ... compromise would have been utterly unrealistic’. De Carlo, *Urbino*, 254.

⁷² De Carlo, *Urbino*, 257.

⁷³ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 254.

⁷⁴ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 256.

proportion to their power to feed back forms are able to outlive the organizational systems which they shaped in the space and even to fit again a new context'.⁷⁵ For De Carlo, this 'capacity to feed back' becomes the main criterion for intervention in the historic city: The focus is not on 'restoring the appearance' of the most historically significant but, rather, on engaging with those buildings that are capable of playing 'an active and stimulating role in a context very different from that which existed at the time of their creation'.⁷⁶ The notion that architectural images and forms actively influence the contexts that generated them becomes central to the notion of the realistic utopia.

De Carlo's architectural work in Urbino was not limited to interventions in existing fabric but also included many new projects. In the 1966 text, he speculates on the possibility for the interactive and utopian quality attributed to the 'resistant' forms to be achieved in 'new forms'. At this point, he holds back from the later ambition of "Il pubblico" and 'an architecture of participation', noting that 'we cannot count in advance on their capacity for feeding back' and, as such, must simply 'base our judgement on their fitness'.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, it would be mainly through one of these 'new forms' in Urbino, the Collegio del Colle (1962-66), that De Carlo became better known internationally.⁷⁸

Pluralism and Happiness in the United States: Possible Influences of Advocacy Planning and Pop Architecture

As a result of his growing international reputation, De Carlo was invited to several North American universities from the mid-1960s. As discussed below, this context was important both because of the new ideas he encountered and for the opportunity to develop his own theorisations through lectures and articles. At the time, architects and planners in the United States were developing diverse positions based on ideas very similar to those which De Carlo would later articulate as participation. For Mirko Zardini, the 'theme of participation' in De Carlo's work was directly linked to the experiences of advocacy planning in the United States.⁷⁹ The original article from which the term emerged—Paul Davidoff's "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning" (1965)—does contain significant overlap with De Carlo's later work on participation. In the article Davidoff sketched a reformulation of planning as a 'plural' process in which the planner becomes an impassioned 'advocate' for specific interest groups in society 'so as to

⁷⁵ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 256.

⁷⁶ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 256-257.

⁷⁷ De Carlo, *Urbino*, 257.

⁷⁸ This link is made by Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 217. As discussed in the next section, Peter Blake presented the *Collegio* in his own lecture in Melbourne, which was followed the next year by De Carlo. Peter Blake, *The New Forces* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1971), 33-37.

⁷⁹ Zardini, "Crestomazia decarlana," 94.

include rather than exclude citizens from participating in the process'.⁸⁰ This was necessary to achieve what could be described as his own kind of realistic utopia in which '[t]he present can become an epoch in which the dreams of the past for an enlightened and just democracy can be turned into a reality'.⁸¹ Within this reformed practice, planning is able to invite 'political and social values to be examined and debated', thereby rejecting the idea of 'the planner acting solely as technician'.⁸² Or, in the words De Carlo would soon use for architecture, beginning to ask 'why' instead of simply 'how'. Davidoff wrote that 'The difficulty with current citizen participation programs is that citizens are more often reacting to agency programs than proposing their concepts of appropriate goals and future action'.⁸³ This suggested a role for the plan which, in terms that are similar to De Carlo's realistic utopia, would be both critical and propositional.

Davidoff's 'plural planning' is a model which allows each specific interest group in society (with funding support as required) to formulate its own alternative. He argues that those who disagreed with official plans should 'prepare one of their own' to create an environment of productive critique and contestation through '[t]he advocacy of alternative plans by interest groups'. In this critical-propositional form of planning, the planner must discard the pretence of technical neutrality. More than an analyst, the planner becomes a 'proponent of specific substantive solutions'.⁸⁴ Here, in a similar role to that of the architect in De Carlo's first phase of process planning; 'The advocate planner would devote much attention to assisting the client organisation to clarify its ideas and to give expression to them'.⁸⁵ Just as, for De Carlo, participation of users did not mean discarding the professional judgement of the architect such that 'the users dictate and the architects transcribe', Davidoff saw advocacy as a kind of propositional critique itself, which should operate not only in contestation with the plans of other groups, but also in dialogue with client groups themselves.⁸⁶ While these similarities are of interest and would suggest some relationship of influence, it is hard to point to any actual correspondence or explicit referencing of Davidoff's work by De Carlo in his own formulation. It should also be noted that, while there is significant overlap, there are equally large divergences. For Davidoff, the scope of advocacy planning included 'community development' drafted on behalf of 'political parties' and 'real estate boards', actors who for De Carlo would have already been well represented in current planning processes.

⁸⁰ Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31, no. 4 (November 1965): 332.

⁸¹ Davidoff, "Advocacy," 331.

⁸² Davidoff, "Advocacy," 331.

⁸³ Davidoff, "Advocacy," 334.

⁸⁴ Davidoff, "Advocacy," 332-333.

⁸⁵ Davidoff, "Advocacy," 333.

⁸⁶ "The advocate planner would be responsible to his client and would seek to express his client's views. This does not mean that the planner could not seek to persuade his client". Davidoff, "Advocacy," 333.

De Carlo's own statements regarding his time in America and its influence on his thinking relate more explicitly to the 'Pop' tendencies emerging at the time than to any specific engagement with advocacy planning. De Carlo's main bibliographic references to the North American context relate to his time as visiting professor at Yale University in 1966. He had been invited by Paul Rudolph who, by the time of De Carlo's arrival, had been replaced as Chairman by Charles Moore. Here he encountered a number of leading American architects and writers including, besides Moore himself, Robert Venturi, Hugh Hardy, Chet Sprague and Peter Blake.⁸⁷ De Carlo was enlivened by his experiences, the disciplinary celebration of popular culture, the emerging student movements and the reprieve from the 'smallness' of the Italian debate.⁸⁸

In assessing the approaches he encountered, De Carlo found the lack of critical engagement with forces external to architecture to be problematic.⁸⁹ When Peter Blake, also a contact from Yale, gave his lecture in Melbourne in 1970, preceding De Carlo in the same series by a year, he set himself the task of outlining the 'New Forces' operating in architecture.⁹⁰ The first of these forces was the discovery of Pop Art and the attempt to draw something similar into architecture, which he mainly explored through the work of Venturi.⁹¹ The second force concerned the megastructural potential of oil-rigs and rocket launch sites, in which the 'visionary' projects of 'people like Cedric Price and the Archigrammers' had unwittingly become realised. While these two 'forces' involved architects dealing with the 'ready-mades' of society, the third and final force identified by Blake related to architects' attempts to accommodate unpredictable social change within their designs. As examples, he cited John Andrews' Scarborough College, the development of Le Mirial by Candalis, Josic and Woods, and De Carlo's Collegio del Colle outside Urbino.⁹² A year later, De Carlo commented through his own lecture on the first of Blake's 'forces'. While acknowledging some value in declaring independence from 'abstract technocratic fanaticism', he saw both Pop art and the discovery of Las Vegas as primarily an 'internal quarrel' of the discipline—one which did 'not really scare anyone' outside but, rather, made 'more acceptable some anomalies of our economic and social development'.⁹³ This can be connected to the image of the 'sheep in wolf's clothing' he had deployed earlier to dismiss the supposedly radical appearance of classical elements.⁹⁴ For De Carlo, here again there was a lack of understanding of the conflicted relationship that architecture had to those in power, and it offered no new tools to navigate this issue.

⁸⁷ De Carlo, Zucchi, interview in Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 171.

⁸⁸ Zardini, "Crestomazia decarliana," 117.

⁸⁹ De Carlo, Zucchi, interview in Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 171.

⁹⁰ Peter Blake, *The New Forces*.

⁹¹ In his description of this 'force' Blake regrets the 'blind snobbishness' of his earlier work, *God's Own Junkyard*. Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard; The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1964). Blake, *The New Forces*, 3-7.

⁹² Blake, *The New Forces*, 31-39.

⁹³ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 38.

⁹⁴ De Carlo, "Problemi concreti per i giovani delle colonne," 83.

Of all the various positions De Carlo encountered in his time at Yale, it was that of Charles Moore in which he saw the most potential. Within the ‘eclecticism’ practised by many of the Americans, De Carlo found Charles Moore’s version a ‘healthier return to American tradition’.⁹⁵ Overall, he much preferred the American version of ‘neo-eclecticism’, which he described as ‘carefree and happy’, in contrast to the European version, which he saw as ‘oppressive, funereal, depressing’.⁹⁶ Presumably, this was a thinly-veiled reference to Rossi and other ‘devotees of typology’. Moore would go on to conduct various ‘carefree’ experiments in participation, of which the main work, the St Matthew’s Church, came much later and was preceded by a series of design workshops coordinated by Jim Burns. Like Moore, Burns had worked on the ‘Take Part’ workshops of Lawrence Halprin in 1968.⁹⁷ These, some of which were conducted at Moore, Lyndon, Turbull and Whitaker’s Sea Ranch, drew from counter-cultural movements and participatory performance techniques to develop a method to facilitate citizen participation in environmental design.⁹⁸ Moore’s approach, however, never extended much beyond the participation of groups of paying clients, a practice Johann Albrecht would later dismiss as ‘elite participation’.⁹⁹ Ultimately, all the ‘happy’ approaches De Carlo encountered in North America lacked the crucial element he was seeking to develop in his own theory—a means for architecture to critically engage with the social, political and financial forces that frame its interventions.

Activities, Structures, Forms: Utopia and the Notion of ‘Feedback’

Working outside his own context contributed to De Carlo’s developing theory in another way, by providing a space in which to develop and test his emerging ideas of a critical relationship between the forms of architecture and the structures of society. This can be seen through a series of lecture notes from the mid-1960s, in both North America and Berlin.¹⁰⁰ Here prefigurations of the realistic utopia can be clearly read, particularly in terms of the precise descriptions of architecture operating in relation to the structures that frame it and which are enacted through an iterative process of feedback:

⁹⁵ De Carlo, Interview by Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 171.

⁹⁶ De Carlo, Interview by Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 172.

⁹⁷ Richard Song, “Charles Moore and his Clients: Designing St Matthew’s”, in *Charles Moore: Buildings and Projects 1949-1986*, ed. Eugene J. Johnson (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 47.

⁹⁸ Alison B. Hirsch, “Take Part: Scoring a Participatory Process,” in *The Other Architect*, ed. Giovanna Borasi (Montreal: The Canadian Center for Architecture, 2015), 384.

⁹⁹ Johann Albrecht, “Towards a Theory of Participation in Architecture: An Examination of Humanistic Planning Theories,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 42, No. 1 (1988): 24.

¹⁰⁰ In 2004 the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IUAV) acquired and organised the De Carlo archives. Francesco Samassa, a former editor of the journal founded by De Carlo, *Spazio e Società*, published in two volumes a curated set of documents from the archive and a series of interpretive essays. It is from these that the lecture notes are taken. Samassa, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Percorsi*, and Samassa, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Inventario Analitico dell’Archivio*.

Our work is in the field of forms. But forms have actions of feedback on structures and functions. Therefore we are concerned in forms and in their relations with structures and activities... Therefore it is possible to distinguish in the making of architectural form two different moments: the moment of the definition of form's structure, the moment of the utopistic jump. Both moments are interrelated and the process of form is not complete if it stops at the structural moment. The same utopistic jump is nonsense if it not based on a structural definition.¹⁰¹

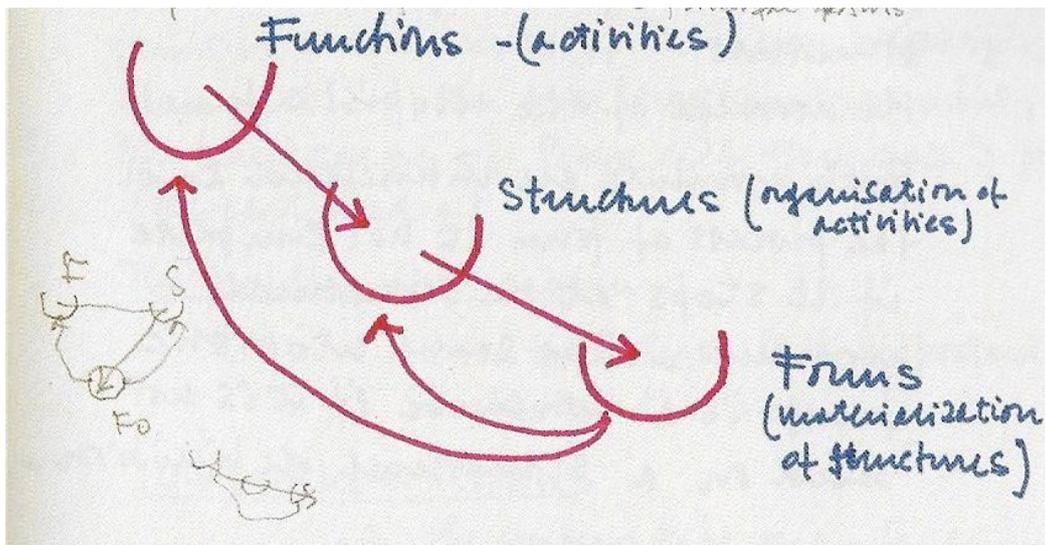


Figure 2.5. Diagram contained in the notes by Giancarlo De Carlo for a lecture in Berlin in 1964. Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, "Appunti preparati per una presentazione di due progetti, Berlino, 12-17 ottobre 1964" *Giancarlo De Carlo: Percorsi*, 377.

This quote is accompanied by the diagram shown in Figure 2.5. In his analysis of the diagram and text, Samassa associates 'the definition of form's structure' with the arrow indicating feedback from architectural forms to the structures that determine them, and the 'utopistic jump' with the arrow indicating feedback from forms to functions. In notes for a lecture at Yale a few years later, De Carlo discusses the same relationship of activity, structure and form in terms of the inseparability of urbanism (typically associated with organisational structure) and architecture (typically associated with physical form):

Especially for architecture (but I guess for all activities concerned with form) the problem of form is a problem of structure too. Symmetrically a problem of structure implies a problem of form too. In the domain of the physical space the structure is an organisational system which makes actual the potential activities of men and society.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Appunti preparati per una presentazione di due progetti, Berlino, 12-17 ottobre 1964," *Giancarlo De Carlo: Percorsi*, 377-378.

¹⁰² Giancarlo De Carlo, "Appunti per un intervento, Yale New Haven, 2 maggio 1966," *Giancarlo De Carlo: Percorsi*, 432.

Here, De Carlo prefigures his notion of architecture's possibility to influence social transformation via iterative cycles of proposition and critique. He adds more definition to the precise relationship of influence and feedback: 'what appears as form already exists as an embryo inside the structure' while 'the quality of form feeds back to the structure and affects its organisational pattern'.¹⁰³ Through this explicitly relational understanding, he proposes that forms be intentionally developed through 'a dialectical process which unfolds itself within the contradiction between the individual and the collective sphere',¹⁰⁴ and in which the 'the city must be a client of the architects'.¹⁰⁵ This can be seen as an early formulation of what would later be emphasised as "Il pubblico"—the user as the true protagonist of architecture.

De Carlo clarifies the precise meaning of 'structure' in another lecture in the US a year later, this time in Harvard. He positions it in contrast to the 'simple and unsophisticated' modernist coupling of form and function in order to approach the true complexity of life: 'a city is an intermingling of activities which are realised in tridimensional space by a texture of forms. The flow of relationships passes through a "medium" which is the structure'.¹⁰⁶ De Carlo goes on at length to articulate his meaning of 'structure' through the example of a simple activity, 'to sit', and its corresponding simple form, 'the chair'. In his description, the 'structure' bridges both the person sitting and the chair to be sat on as well as a vast complexity of other connected factors, influences and relationships. Here is a pre-formulation of what will become the transformative potential of the realistic utopia. While De Carlo states that 'architecture cannot easily change the world', it can use the medium of 'structure' to exert influence as a series of iterative feedback loops, the primary action later articulated through the realistic utopia: 'the changes which a form can induce in a function pass again through the structure and therefore they mediate; they are, actually feedbacks'.¹⁰⁷ Here is an explicit prefiguration of the iterative process of proposition and critique which underpins his later understanding of the critical potential of the realistic utopia.

¹⁰³ De Carlo, "Appunti per un intervento, Yale," 432.

¹⁰⁴ De Carlo, "Appunti per un intervento, Yale," 436.

¹⁰⁵ De Carlo, "Appunti per un intervento, Yale," 434.

¹⁰⁶ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Testo delle conclusioni ad un intervento ad Harvard, dicembre 1967," *Giancarlo De Carlo: Percorsi*, 441.

¹⁰⁷ De Carlo, "Testo delle conclusioni ad un intervento ad Harvard, dicembre 1967," 443.

He also sketches the role of attentive analysis as key to this critical endeavour. “To do that however, it should understand the world in its whole complexity, it should come out of the private and academical debate of small élite groups and face the big problems of the greater numbers, the larger scale, the widespread communication and participation.”¹⁰⁸ He sets the task for contemporary architects as ‘preparing a new environment for the new world’, a task only possible if the full relational aspects of the structure in which architects practise is comprehensively studied and critiqued. De Carlo’s idea of the ‘new world’, and the possibility for architecture to play a role in its formation, was catalysed by his encounters with students and protest movements in the immediate lead-up to his formulation of participation.

The Revolt and the Frustration: Simulated and Real Barricades at the XIVth Milan Triennale

Beyond providing a space in which to develop his ideas and draw him into other contexts, De Carlo’s teaching activity was also significant for the simple fact of bringing him into discussion with student movements in Italy and abroad. The first section of “Il pubblico” addresses ‘The Revolt and the Frustration of ‘The Architecture School’ as the departure point for what would become his thesis on participation. In these lines he describes the student protests of 1968 as ‘the most important event since the end of the second world war’.¹⁰⁹ While it is difficult to find concrete evidence for De Carlo’s claim that ‘the Faculties of Architecture in all countries of the world took a vanguard position’ in these protests, it would seem to have some truth in the case of Italy.¹¹⁰ Vittorio Gregotti provides more detail on the Italian situation in his 1968 account, ‘New Directions in Italian Architecture’, the final chapter of which is dedicated to ‘The Revolt in the Schools of Architecture’. Gregotti also relates the protests to a desire for architecture to go beyond self-expression to consider self-determination.

This revolutionary movement involves many countries but in Italy has often originated in architectural schools. I believe that at its root lies a basic problem of architecture: to design or project creatively not only our wealth or our well-being, but also our choice of our own direction.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ De Carlo, “Testo delle conclusioni ad un intervento ad Harvard, dicembre 1967,” 445.

¹⁰⁹ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 4.

¹¹⁰ Giancarlo De Carlo, “L’architecture est-elle trop important pour être confiée aux architectes,” in *L’architecte n’a plus d’audience. Quel est l’avenir du domaine bâti*, (Liège: L’association pour le progrès intellectuel et artistique de la wallonie, 1969), 19.

¹¹¹ Gregotti, *New Directions*, 118.

For De Carlo, who had been teaching at the IUAV since the 1950s, it was no coincidence that this drive for self-determination originated within the Italian schools of architecture, which ‘had long been dominated by an Academic Body interested only in preventing new ideas from penetrating into the School’.¹¹² This conservatism had, in De Carlo’s analysis, bottled up a push for major renewal among students of architecture, making them the most energetic proponents of change. Gregotti describes how the ‘revolts’ translated into three different academic directions: history and the notion of the type; the extension of architecture to include infrastructure and the environment; and the rationalisation of the design process along positivist and scientific lines.¹¹³ For De Carlo, these outcomes were all dead-ends: ‘the excellent premises which fed the revolt shaded off into a state of confusion which has removed the faculty of architecture from the avant-garde position which it occupied at the beginning to a frustrating and inconclusive rearguard position’. This assessment is supported by Tafuri, who extended the analysis to other cultural institutions:

the rebellious explosion of 1968..., insofar as the architecture schools and cultural institutions were concerned, only resulted in superficial modifications, hasty reflections, and demagogical attitudes resolved in collective débâcles. The protests against the INU and the Milan Triennale... only revealed the fragility of those institutions and their functions.¹¹⁴

In his discussions of protest, De Carlo makes no mention of the blockades of the INU (Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica) or the XIVth Milan Triennale despite or, perhaps, because of his close ties to both. He had been an influential voice and ‘regular speaker’ at the first and was the head of the curatorial committee for the second.¹¹⁵ The events of the XIVth Triennale in particular highlight De Carlo’s ambivalent and conflicted position in regard to the protestors. The exhibition, entitled ‘the greater number’, was in some fashion a sincere effort to address some of the growing critiques of authoritarian tendencies within architecture, with sections dedicated to ‘errors’ and even a late addition documenting the ongoing student uprisings, including a 1:1 replica of a blockaded street (see Figure 2.6). Yet these neat representations could not escape their institutional context, and this is what enraged the protestors.¹¹⁶ As Paola Nicolin notes: ‘Italy was due its revolution, regardless of possible venues, and, at a certain point, regardless of any specific objects or cultural content shown inside those “cathedrals” of power.’¹¹⁷ During the initial

¹¹² De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 4. Details of De Carlo’s involvement with the IUAV can be found in Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 217.

¹¹³ Gregotti, *New Directions*, 106-118.

¹¹⁴ Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture*, 98.

¹¹⁵ Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 217.

¹¹⁶ Federica Vannucchi has suggested that this may have had less to do with the content of the exhibition and more to do with the institution itself. Federica Vannucchi, “The Contested Subject: The Greater Number at the 1968 XIV Triennale of Milano,” in *Exhibiting Architecture: A Paradox?*, ed. Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen (New Haven: Yale School of Architecture, 2015): 109-118.

¹¹⁷ Nicolin, “Beyond the Failure,” 95.

blockade, De Carlo entered discussions with the protestors (Figure 2.7). He invited the them into the exhibition to view the work and debate how it could be transformed. Eventually he offered to cede his own committee's authority to the protestors, inviting them to replace him and propose the reformulation of the Triennale. The dialogue did not succeed, and the protestors occupied the venue until they were forcibly evicted by police, a move opposed by De Carlo and the organising committee.



Figure 2.6. A scene of simulated disorder at the entrance to the 1968 Milan Triennale “La Protesta dei giovani” by De Carlo with Mario Bellochio and Bruno Caruso. Source: Alexandra Brown, “Radical Restructuring: Autonomies in Italian Architecture & Design 1968-73” (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 2014), 119. Original source: Archivio Fotografico Triennale di Milano.



Figure 2.7. De Carlo debates with the artist Gianemilio Simonetti at the 1968 Milan Triennale during the actual blockade of the exhibition. Source: John McKean, *Layered Places*, 168. Photo by Cesare Colombo.

The largely ‘unseen’ Triennale, known primarily for the protest, is also of interest for the material on display. Alongside works by the Smithsons and van Eyck was the ‘urban fiction’ of Archigram’s ‘Mutazione dell’ambiente nell’epoca del Grande Numero (Milanogram)’ and Arata Isozaki’s dystopian ‘Electric Labyrinth’. A temporary pavilion linked to the Palazzo by a pneumatic tunnel housed works by a number of those soon to be called ‘radical architects’, who would go on to produce some of the most powerful and influential ‘visionary’ architecture of the 1970s. Alexandra Brown describes the connection between the XIVth Triennale and the ‘New Domestic landscape’ exhibition in her thesis.¹¹⁸ According to Brown, De Carlo did not actively welcome the participants from this group, both because of his desire to distance the Triennale from the production of luxury goods and his dismissal of their aim to make ‘architecture coincide with design.’¹¹⁹ Despite the possible correspondence between the speculative work of these diverse groups and De Carlo’s notion of the realistic utopia, he appears not to have credited them with anything beyond ‘some interesting ideas.’¹²⁰ The deepest connection with this group appears to be the brief correspondence between De Carlo and Riccardo Dalisi, who would go on to co-found Global Tools, around their divergent notions of participation. Sara Catenacci’s analysis of this interaction suggests that, while Dalisi’s experimentation was of some interest to De Carlo, he critiqued it for being overly theoretical and for aestheticising the notion of ‘disorder.’¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Brown outlines the connection between the XIVth Triennale and the ‘New Domestic landscape’ exhibition in her thesis: Alexandra Brown, “Radical Restructuring: Autonomies in Italian Architecture & Design 1968-73” (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 2014), 83-141.

¹¹⁹ Brown, “Radical Restructuring,” 130. Brown is quoting De Carlo from Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Triennale di Milano 68. A Case Study and Beyond Arata Isozaki’s Electronic Labyrinths. A ‘Ma’ of Images,” in *Iconoclash*, eds. Peter Weibel and Bruno Latour (Karlsruhe: ZKM, 2002), 368.

¹²⁰ Brown, “Radical Restructuring,” 130.

¹²¹ Sara Catenacci, “Maieutica del progetto. Riccardo Dalisi tra architettura, design e ‘animazione’, 1967-1974,” *L’Uomo Nero*, anno XII, no. 11-12 (May 2015): 187.

A less spectacular connection to the student movement was De Carlo's research and reflection on the state of the Italian universities published as "La piramide rovesciata" (the inverted pyramid), also in 1968.¹²² While the events of the XIVth Triennale placed De Carlo in a profoundly ambiguous relationship with the protestors (simultaneously as target, interlocutor and advocate), the position developed through "La piramide" is more clear-cut. In it he critiqued the modern, hierarchical and restrictive university against both the premodern and unstructured (they had no specific buildings) university-as-community and the student movement's experiments in collective organisation and dissolution of boundaries between student and teacher. These ancient and contemporary models were the prototypes for what De Carlo referred to as a university for the era of 'Il grande numero', which—presumably not coincidentally—was the subject of the XIVth Triennale. De Carlo had already been working on a model of a university embedded into the town of Urbino and had proposed a new organisational model for the university building in Dublin. In the following years, he would develop a model for the University of Pavia which atomised and distributed its presence throughout the entire town, thus giving spatial expression to the notion of a collective and non-hierarchical university for all.¹²³

Bridging "La piramide rovesciata" and "Il pubblico" was a third text, "How/Why to Build School Buildings".¹²⁴ While the scope of architecture discussed is limited to the 'sphere' of education, the text lays out many of the foundational arguments that would be extended to the entirety of architecture in "Il pubblico". Particularly important in this essay is the role of critique, of calling into question the fundamentals of a project before attending to its mechanics: the 'why' taking precedence over the 'how'. De Carlo, presumably invited to contribute to the topic of 'how' to design educational buildings, instead highlights the importance of asking 'why' we should design them at all. 'We cannot deal with problems of "how to" without first posing the problems of "why"'.¹²⁵ De Carlo goes on to relate the need to ask 'why' with a rejection of unrealistic utopian speculations:

If we were to begin discussing immediately the best way to build school buildings for contemporary society without first clarifying the reasons for which contemporary society needs school buildings, we would run the risk of taking for granted decisions and judgements which may not make sense any more; and our speculations would turn out to be sand castles.¹²⁶

¹²² Giancarlo De Carlo, *La piramide rovesciata* (Bari: La Donata, 1968). The text has recently been republished together with 'Il pubblico' and "How/Why to Build School Buildings" as Giancarlo De Carlo, *La piramide rovesciata: A cinquant'anni dalle contestazioni del '68* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018).

¹²³ Francesco Zuddas, "La piramide rovesciata. Università e architettura italiane del '68 secondo Giancarlo De Carlo," *Artribune* (March 2019), <https://www.artribune.com/editoria/libri/2019/03/la-piramide-rovesciata-giancarlo-de-carlo/>

¹²⁴ Giancarlo De Carlo, "How/Why to Build School Buildings" *Harvard Educational Review* 4 (1969): 12-35

¹²⁵ De Carlo, "How/Why to Build School Buildings" 12.

¹²⁶ De Carlo, "How/Why to Build School Buildings," 12.

By not attending to the reality of contemporary needs, works of architecture are mere ‘speculations’, prone to being washed away by the ebb and flow (or rising tides) of societal forces. In this sense, it is the normative, uncritical practice of architecture that engages in vain utopias.

In both “Il pubblico” and *An Architecture of Participation*, as well as later texts and interviews, De Carlo often returned to a critique of specialisation. In “How/Why”, he provided an extended description on the ‘negative meaning’ of specialisation. For De Carlo, specialisation is problematic when it prevents critical reflection by limiting the ‘field of cultural action’.¹²⁷ He saw in the student revolts of the late sixties the desire to repurpose specialisation as a tool of collective participation. This, however, was only possible when ‘the specialist has first achieved a broader understanding so that he is capable of maintaining the capacity to criticize - to accept, reject, or somehow choose, with a political consciousness of his action - the role which the individual assumes in the social context’.¹²⁸ Again we return to the subject of interrelationship. Here De Carlo rejects the model of specialisation as an excuse to ignore the broader context in which an operation is performed. While the discussion is ostensibly related to the move required in education, the essay allows De Carlo to propose a broader remit for this reformulation in the professional field of the architect. The need for each ‘specialised’ activity to situate itself within a broader social context is related to the specific case of the architect:

The architect’s profession - as in all the other professions - is defined and circumscribed by the proxy with which the institutions invest him to carry on a particular specialized activity for them, with the implicit commitment to accept their objectives in exchange for a relative freedom of choice with regard to the technical aspects of the problems with which he deals. The exercise of criticism is permitted as long as it remains inside the system and does not corrode the foundations on which the system is based.

In a situation of collective participation, the proxy does not come from the institutions but from the entire collectivity; or, more exactly, it is not a question of proxy, but of an agreement which is continually renewed by means of a continual confrontation. The exercise of criticism not only is permitted but becomes necessary and cannot be limited to the technical aspects of problems but must be extended to the whole range of problems which runs from the motivations to the consequences of every decision.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings,” 15.

¹²⁸ De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings,” 15.

¹²⁹ De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings,” 23.

Here, the task of the architect is to go beyond designing with an awareness of user needs to actively instigating a ‘continual confrontation’ with the users, to question and reformulate everything from the motivations of a project to its projected consequences. By engaging in a critical examination of the ‘elementary questions’ of each project, the architect is able to come much closer to ‘reality’, seen not as a static element but one which is in constant movement: ‘often the most elementary questions - which no one has asked for a long time because they seem so obvious - can help us to discover the hidden thread in the evolution of a new reality’.¹³⁰ It is the absence of this questioning that dislocates architecture from reality, understood as context: ‘the procedure suffers at every stage from the abstractness accepted at the beginning when the activity was taken out of its context, cutting its ties with reality’.¹³¹ This questioning attitude is again positioned as both fundamental to and only possible through collective participation. Collective participation is here distinguished from ‘the discriminatory and segregational participation’ present in contemporary practice. Collective participation requires attention to reality: ‘In a situation of collective participation, the consideration of the network of interrelations which are established between every new project and the context to which it is destined become fundamental’.¹³² As indicated above, the terms ‘context’ and ‘reality’ are closely linked for De Carlo. This statement, then, provides us with a means to better understand De Carlo’s ‘realism’. It is not a static thing but, rather, a ‘network of interrelations’.

The student revolt offered, for De Carlo, one of the ‘few episodes where collective participation [...] has manifested itself’ to reveal a ‘new architecture of the school’. As such, the essay is illustrated with unlabelled images of young people marching down city streets which, presumably, were taken from scenes of student action around Europe. The images always show the students in the foreground. Cathedrals and other grand buildings appear only as backdrops to their marches (Figure 2.8). Monumental statues are infrastructure for new inhabitations and social activities (Figure 2.9). The only ‘object’ featured in the foreground is a curious hand-built structure at a resolutely human scale (Figure 2.10).

¹³⁰ De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings,” 23.

¹³¹ De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings,” 24.

¹³² De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings,” 23.



Figure 2.8. In the essay, the students are shown in the foreground, the architecture is mere backdrop to their actions. Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings”, *Harvard Educational Review* 4 (1969): 28.



Figure 2.9. Monuments become unwitting infrastructure for ‘activities and communications’. Source: De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings”, 33.



Figure 2.10. The only objects featured as ‘actors’ in the foreground are these impermanent tents and hand-built structures. Source: De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings”, 22.

These images reveal a process described by De Carlo as:

spaces radically transformed by the introduction of new uses, objects and signs of extemporaneous intervention superimposed on the immobile insignia of the authorities, colorful and irreverent lacerations of the gray austere expressions of order, facades disintegrated by signs and banners communicating with the world outside, parks and gardens rescued from their decorative existences and filled with activities and communications, overflow into the surrounding environment, invasion of the streets, overturning of automobiles, ballet with the police, continual and impassioned contact with the people and so on and so forth.¹³³

¹³³ De Carlo, “How/Why to Build School Buildings,” 34.

These acts of unintended use, of a new ‘architecture’ being practised in spite of the rigidity of the objects in which they are framed, highlights what De Carlo saw as the stupidity of form as an endpoint in the face of social change. At the same time, they demonstrate the flexibility of objects, which can be opened up, rethought and transformed through use. We can see here a seed of De Carlo’s iterative and interconnected stages of design. It is in these radical acts of ‘mis-use’ at the ‘end point’ of design that De Carlo discerns the practice of collective participation which, he will later argue, needs to be continually re-inserted into the very beginning of the design process. Importantly, the spirit of active criticism needs to be carried along for this ‘collective ‘participation’ to succeed.

Participation, Process and Utopia in the Work of Lucius Burckhardt.

De Carlo’s note at the beginning of “Il pubblico” states: “The first part of this writing derives from a paper given at Liège on 24-25/10/1969 as part of an international conference on the theme: *L’architecte n’a plus d’audience. Quel est l’avenir du domaine bâti?* (The architect no longer has an audience. What is the future of the built environment?).¹³⁴ The published conference proceedings contain only a brief abstract of De Carlo’s contribution.¹³⁵ The title, “*L’architecture est-elle trop important pour être confiée aux architect?*”, frames as a question his famous later statement, ‘Architecture is too important to be left to the architects’.¹³⁶ In his abstract, De Carlo outlines four points which all relate to a fundamental doubt over the continued relevance of architecture and, more particularly, the figure of the architect, to society.¹³⁷ This position aligned with many of the contributions, including critiques of the modern movement from other notable figures such as the Belgian critic Geert Bekaert, to depict a profession in crisis and confusion (Fig. 2.11).

¹³⁴ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 4. “La prima parte di questo scritto deriva da una comunicazione tenuta a Liegi il 24-25/10/1969 in occasione di una convegno internazionale sul tema: “L’architecte n’a plus d’audience. Quel est l’avenir du domaine bâti?””

¹³⁵ De Carlo, “l’architecture est-elle trop important pour être confiée aux architect,” 19.

¹³⁶ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 9.

¹³⁷ De Carlo, “l’architecture est-elle trop important pour être confiée aux architect,” 19.

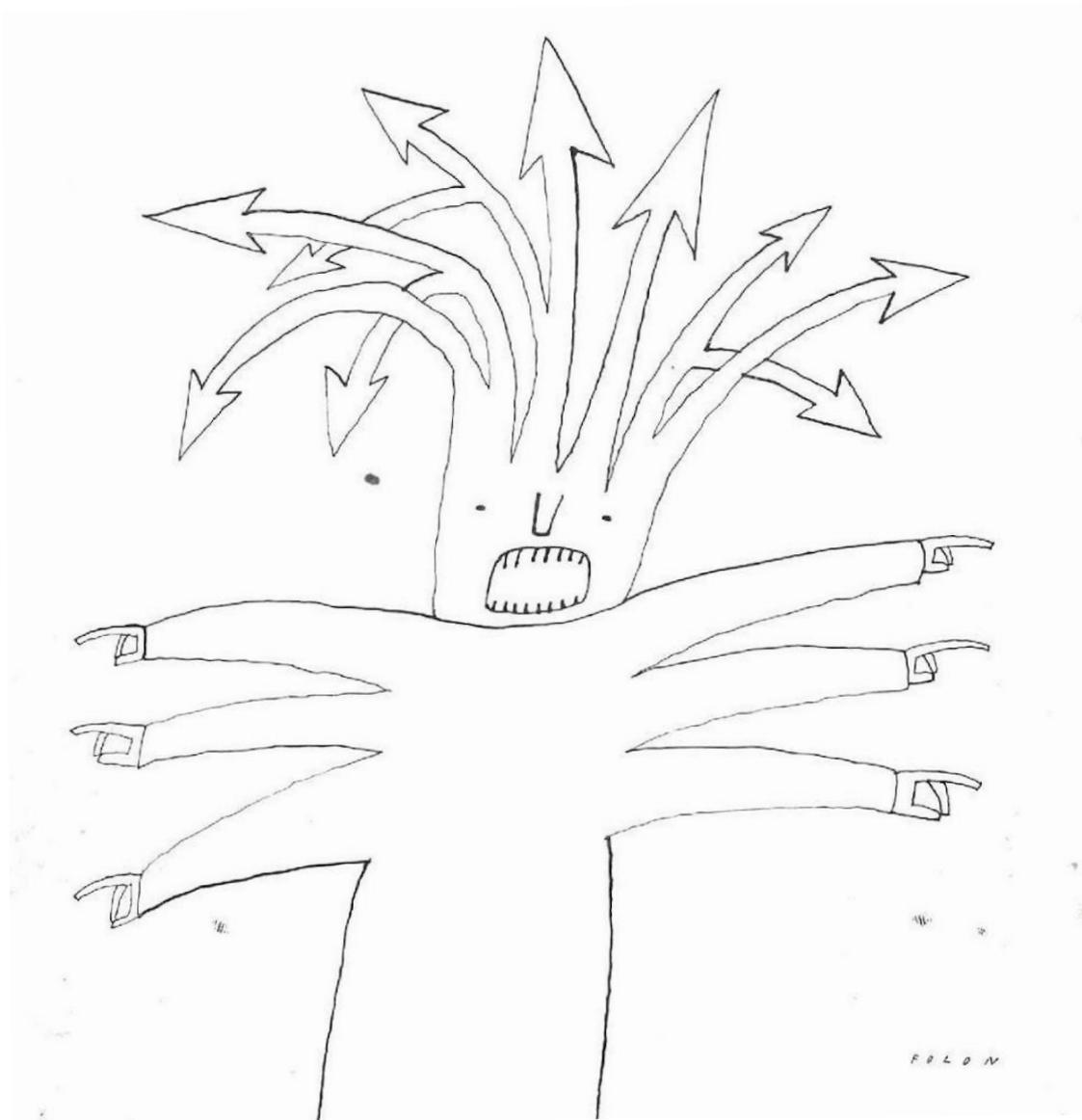


Figure 2.11. Cartoon from the cover of the 1969 Liège conference proceedings depicts a figure in crisis, presumably the ‘architect’, in deep confusion yet nevertheless attempting to direct. *L’architecte n’a plus d’audience. Quel est l’avenir du domaine bâti*, (Liège: L’association pour le progrès intellectuel et artistique de la wallonie, 1969).

De Carlo’s statement that the text which appears in *Parametro* was a derivation, and only the first part at that, implies that it had been significantly developed since the conference.¹³⁸ When the full text is published as “Il pubblico dell’architettura” the following year, the critical reflection implied by De Carlo’s list of points in Liège is expanded as a penetrating critique of architecture in relation to society.¹³⁹ To this, he adds a ‘second part’ which sets out in detail his vision for the implementation of participation in architecture, described as ‘process planning’. Nowhere in the abstract does De Carlo mention participation or, indeed, offer solutions to any of the proposed dilemmas. This is at odds with the majority of other contributions, many of which specifically engage with participation as a means to recover

¹³⁸ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 4.

¹³⁹ The exploration of who is architecture’s ‘public’ central to the article can be read as a response to the provocation of the conference title.

architecture's future. Notable among these is the contribution by the Swiss sociologist and key proponent of participation in the built environment at the time, Lucius Burckhardt.¹⁴⁰ This is of particular interest given that Burckhardt's contribution to the Liège conference, "Le processus du bâtiment". There Burckhardt states: "The building - it is a system of interactions between various jurisdictions, it is a chain of decisions made by politicians, civil servants, specialists, the public".¹⁴¹ Re-framing building as a process and a relational system, rather than an object, draws it into close proximity the notion De Carlo would go onto describe as process planning.

For Burckhardt, as for De Carlo, the problems of architecture and urbanism stemmed from their oversimplification and specialisation into mono-functional categories. For both, it was the disruptive inclusion of the actual user which could resolve these issues and return 'process' to the constructed environment. Burckhardt is relevant to an assessment of De Carlo's notion of participation in relation to the use of utopian form as a tool within such a practice. The usefulness of utopias, and their relevance to processes of public decision making, was of particular interest to Burckhardt. In 1957, as part of a critique of myopic urban planning practices, he outlined a proposal to reconnect the processes of politics and the making of the urban environment. Utopias had an explicit role here: 'what are political parties but advocates of various social utopias? And what is urban planning but an attempt to make such utopias real?'.¹⁴²

A year before the Liège conference, Burckhardt had written specifically on the topic of urban utopias.¹⁴³ From the outset, he relates the utopia to the political process of decisions regarding what is to be built. For Burckhardt, a key problem for architecture and urban planning is its inherent drive to simplify: 'Any design process is insofar a process of reduction, of paring down a program to its requisite objectives.' Modernist architecture had taken this to its extreme: 'an architecture whose compromises are tailored to a single architectural objective'.¹⁴⁴ In terms similar to De Carlo's critique of 'specialisation' as a kind of mono-functionalism, Burckhardt notes that the 'resolution of specific tasks has an isolating character: every building fulfils its appointed task by excluding every conceivable secondary task'.¹⁴⁵ For Burckhardt, it was the exclusion of the universal that had generated the emergence of the 'utopian moment' as both

¹⁴⁰ Lucius Burckhardt, "Le processus du bâtiment," in *L'architecte n'a plus d'audience. Quel est l'avenir du domaine bâti?*, 18. While the proximity of these two significant voices on participation provides intriguing grounds for speculation as to possible dialogue or influence, no correspondence between the two appears in the Giancarlo De Carlo archives in IAUU.

¹⁴¹ 'Le bâtiment — c'est un système d'interactions entre divers ressorts, c'est une chaîne de décisions prises par les politiciens, les fonctionnaires, les spécialistes, le public.' Burckhardt, "Le processus du bâtiment," 17.

¹⁴² Lucius Burckhardt, "Urban Planning and Democracy (1957)," in *Lucius Burckhardt Writings* ed. Jesko Fezer and Martin Schmitz, (Vienna: Springer-Verlag, 2012), 34

¹⁴³ Lucius Burckhardt, "On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968)," in *Lucius Burckhardt Writings* (op. cit), 63-76; originally published as "Wert und Sinn städtebaulicher Utopien," in *Das Ende der Städte?* ed. R. Schmidt (Stuttgart 1968), 111– 119.

¹⁴⁴ Burckhardt, "On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968)," 63.

¹⁴⁵ Burckhardt, "On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968)," 64.

a reaction to, and a product of functionalism.¹⁴⁶ He goes on to analyse the specific relations of various ‘technological’, ‘urbanistic’, ‘urban fiction’ and ‘integrated’ utopian tendencies.¹⁴⁷ The integrated utopias are of particular interest because of their engagement with the present condition and the process of ‘transition from past and present circumstances to those of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow’.¹⁴⁸ For Burckhardt what is missing from all these categories are truly ‘social’ utopias able to outline a ‘depiction of the processes’ by which this move from present circumstances to the proposed future state.¹⁴⁹

In a passage that connects the utility of the utopian form and the processes of participatory urbanism, Burckhardt outlines a productive role for utopia in the difficult area of urban decision making. A major problem in dealing with the complexity of urban issues is that they are largely invisible: “That which we can name is something we can also reach a decision on, or destroy; whatever has no “face” has no name, and consequently cannot be debated publicly’.¹⁵⁰ This is where the formulation can play a role, to provide a ‘face’ to what De Carlo would refer to as ‘the motivations and consequences’ of complex urban developments: ‘Utopia can render service here to the resolution process: it lends a face to new principles of urban planning, so that these can flow into the decision-makers’ political consciousness. The future, in acquiring a face, becomes communicable and therefore conclusive’.¹⁵¹ This connects closely with De Carlo’s notion of the image and counter-image of the realistic utopia ‘being able to produce concrete images of what the physical environment would be like if the structure of society were different’.¹⁵² For both De Carlo and Burckhardt, the utopian image, which reveals possibilities and consequences, is an important tool for enabling collective participation in city making and architecture.

Utopia for Burckhardt ‘creates a formal idiom in which it is possible to reach an agreement on urban problems’.¹⁵³ This connects precisely with De Carlo’s later notion of the realistic utopia as a tool within the broader practice of ‘an architecture of participation’. Utopias are useful in so far as they assist in the ‘discovery of needs’: ‘In giving palpable expression to the solution of future needs, the designer or planner of utopias renders the needs themselves visible, and confronts the public with that which the future holds in store’.¹⁵⁴ Utopias are ‘tentative hypotheses’, acting not as a ‘call for their realization ... but as planners’ anguished plea for society to free them finally from the dual burden of both formulating and solving

¹⁴⁶ Burckhardt, “On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968),” 65.

¹⁴⁷ Burckhardt cites Kenzo Tange’s plan for Greater Tokyo and Yona Friedman’s Spatial City as examples of the ‘urbanistic utopia’. The practices of Archigram are the primary example of ‘urban fiction’. Cedric Price’s ‘Potteries Thinkbelt’ and Walter Förderer’s ‘Urban Redevelopment without Land Reform’ are given as examples of ‘integrated utopias’.

¹⁴⁸ Burckhardt, “On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968),” 70.

¹⁴⁹ He nevertheless acknowledges the ‘shrewd script’ of Friedman. Burckhardt, “On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968),” 73-74.

¹⁵⁰ Burckhardt, “On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968),” 75.

¹⁵¹ Burckhardt, “On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968)” 75-76.

¹⁵² De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 10.

¹⁵³ Burckhardt, “On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968),” 65.

¹⁵⁴ Burckhardt, “On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968),” 76.

tasks'.¹⁵⁵ Utopias are not simply a tool within processes of participation and decision making; they are intended to solicit it: 'Architects want to awaken their partner in the design process - the client and user - or even completely reinvent him. They want a counterpart who is open to discussion, who doesn't merely say yes or, if need be, no, but who expresses his own will in discussions'.¹⁵⁶ In this way, Burckhardt draws together the concerns of participation and the tools of utopian speculation. As with De Carlo's realistic utopia, the speculative exercise operates as part of an iterative process, continually stimulating participation and being influenced by it in turn.

An Obligation to Provide Dreams

Another confluence between participation and utopia can be found in a meeting of Team 10. In 1969, the Smithsons organised a small 'family' meeting of Team 10 in London, the first meeting after the XIVth Milan Triennale. In their 'Chronological Documentation of Team 10 Meetings', Risselada and van den Heuvel do not include a detailed account of the meeting or any documentation of the projects discussed, although the projects are listed in the Archive section, where Erskine is noted as presenting the Bykker reconstruction project and De Carlo as discussing 'Interventions in the historical city' (presumably a discussion of Urbino or, perhaps, his initial plans for Rimini).¹⁵⁷ A piece of writing from this meeting does make it into Alison Smithson's 1981 compilation of documents, described only as 'Portions of a document concerning a Team 10 Meeting' and dated 10 December 1969.¹⁵⁸ The date places it after De Carlo's lecture in Liège and the subsequent publication of "*Il pubblico*" in *Parametro* the following year. Although the document is not attributed, the pivotal and detailed reference to Rimini, where De Carlo had just begun to work, points to his central involvement in its drafting, while references to 'traffic', 'sweetness' and 'family' all bear the fingerprints of the Smithsons. While the topic of the meeting was 'open design and advocacy planning', the statement presents a nuanced take on how the architect should operate in this participatory mode.¹⁵⁹ It acknowledges that the architect is not separate from society (riding the same buses, watching the same TV shows) and is always 'listening', even when not explicitly 'taking instruction'. The emphasis of the piece is on the obligation of the architect to 'provide dreams' to society. It is an assertion of the active role of the architect, but one which is explicitly framed as a service:

¹⁵⁵ Burckhardt, "On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968)," 76.

¹⁵⁶ Burckhardt, "On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968)," 76.

¹⁵⁷ Risselada and van den Heuvel, *Team 10*, 352.

¹⁵⁸ Team 10, "Portion of a Document; Team 10 December 1969," in *The Emergence of Team 10 out of C.I.A.M.*, comp. Alison Smithson (London: Architectural Association, 1982), 92-94.

¹⁵⁹ Risselada and van den Heuvel, *Team 10*, 352.

The architect has an obligation to provide society with ‘dreams’ of what buildings and cities could be like and to bring these through the economic and administrative situations to fruition, in order that people can see and experience and thus have a greater knowledge of the possibilities.¹⁶⁰

Here we can see a clear bridge between the ideas of ‘participation’ and ‘Utopia’, here framed as ‘dreams’. In a setting seemingly tasked with a consideration of participation by the user, it is significant that the emphasis is on the role of the architect to promote ‘greater knowledge of the possibilities’, rather than any specific formulation for enabling participation. The division between ‘architect’ and ‘the people’ is questioned, the architect being described as ‘both full of the people and of the people. He has not stepped out of a Monastery or off a rowing boat from a light house’.¹⁶¹ The text in some way appears as a defence of the visionary role of the architect, albeit one wholly embedded in, and at the service of, society: ‘We have to act as architects, building our “dream” and by this way people can smell, feel and taste of a possible different way of life’. There is a clear defensive intent to the text, aimed at those who would label architecture as inherently compromised in its relations to ‘the establishment’ and, therefore, lacking any possibility of being able to ‘act’. In addressing those (particularly students) ‘who feel they cannot commit themselves to express themselves as architects - putting forms round words and thoughts about society’, the text offers this advice: ‘to verbally talk about being an architect is not one, it is necessary to push words rub thought over hands onto paper and ultimately out into cement’. This passage makes clear that utopias unrealised were not worth much to Team 10.

A Reticulated Image of the Realistic Utopia

The concept of the realistic utopia, which De Carlo spoke of directly in only a single lecture in 1971, has deep resonance with concepts he himself and many of his contemporaries had been developing over the previous 20 years. Through this chapter De Carlo’s ideas were placed in relation to a set of contemporaneous and proximate positions on utopia and reality in architecture to highlight their distinctions and commonalities and to draw out threads of possible influence. This chapter provided the crucial background to understanding the contexts from which De Carlo’s ideas emerged and against which they were directed. Here the realistic utopia, as an integral component of participation, can be clearly seen as a itself critical image for reformulating the practice of architecture in the shadow of the perceived failures of the modern movement.

¹⁶⁰ Team 10, “Portion of a Document,” 92.

¹⁶¹ Team 10, “Portion of a Document,” 93

As I argued in the previous chapter, the concept of the realistic utopia crystallises multiple aspects of De Carlo's broader thesis of participation in architecture which have been lost in present-day understandings of the term. Principally, these relate to the idea that architectural propositions, understood both as images and built forms, can support incremental social and political change, but only through an intensive dialogue with the context and the user. Architectural images, understood as tentative hypotheses, act as both critical reflections on the current social and economic conditions and propositions for alternative arrangements of these same forces, made concrete through the built environment. Such a propositional critique can only be produced when the realities of the context, of the users, have been understood as a complex network of interrelationship between manifold social, political, financial forces and desires. As such, the realistic utopia is proposed as a means by which a practice of participation can critically engage with the systems that frame its interventions and, at the same time, is one which is only possible through constant and conflictual participation. It is a format that always aims to generate its own replacement.

In this chapter, the concept of the realistic utopia has been expanded by connecting it to moments, contexts and concerns that do not appear explicitly in the texts read in Chapter 1. His discomfort at the discord between orthodox modernist principles and people's social lives, first observed at Sesto San Giovanni, initiated a long search for a way to understand architecture beyond formalism. Arguably, this reached its clearest expression in the late 1960s in his work at Urbino, where he first spoke of the potential 'utopian' quality of form in relation to social process. De Carlo was not developing his ideas in isolation, and his conceptions bear many commonalities with others of the time, especially the members of Team 10, whose attitude to the 'Utopia of the present' and the obligation to provide 'dreams' clearly influenced De Carlo's own attitude to the utility of Utopia within a practice of participation. Commonalities can be found amongst those he disagreed with, such as the 'Utopia of reality' of his sometime mentor, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, or in those whose contact with De Carlo was fleeting, such as Lucius Burkhardt, in whose writing we find a notion of utopia as a tool for participation very much aligned with De Carlo's. In Aldo van Eyck's notion of 'twin-phenomena' we find a useful means to expand our understanding of the realistic utopia, a kind of 'twin-phenomena' in itself. The realistic Utopia is fixed but fluid, a process-form, a propositional-critique, a relational-artefact, a problematic-solution, a questioning-answer.

On one level, the realistic utopia is a culmination of De Carlo's own quest to redefine the conception of form in architecture. While in the 1950s he declared his position as 'antiformalist', his theoretical work in the 1960s, undoubtedly informed by his international experiences, focussed on revealing the relational aspects of form. This work, articulated most directly in his archived lecture notes, contains much of what would later be articulated as the realistic utopia. Here architecture instigates a dialectical process with the structures that organise society. He sketches a model in which architecture 'cannot easily change the world' but can exert influence through feedback generated by the development of 'utopistic jumps',

which prefigure ‘a new environment for the new world’.¹⁶² The other crucial aspect is that, in order to make such jumps, architecture must understand the world in its whole complexity and understand in each activity the network of relationships at work. The main contribution of this chapter to the overall development of the thesis is in these deeper articulations of the content of the realistic utopia as a propositional-critique, a relational-artefact, and a process-form. These aspects are highlighted to strengthen the claim that the realistic utopia offers a conceptual framework within which a practice of architecture concerned with participation can engage critically with the broader systems of politics, society and finance that frame its interventions.

¹⁶² Giancarlo De Carlo, “Appunti preparati per una presentazione di due progetti, Berlino,” 378.

3. Images of Participation in De Carlo's Urban Experiments 1969-1975

Chapter 1 outlined my reading of the realistic utopia, as the iterative process of producing critical counter-images within an architecture of participation, as drawn from the writings of Giancarlo De Carlo. Chapter 2 located this concept in the context of De Carlo's earlier work and in relation to a range of complementary and contrasting positions at the time. This chapter explores the concept further through an analysis of De Carlo's two large-scale projects of participation in housing and urban planning: Villaggio Matteotti (1969-1974) and the Rimini New Centre Plan (1969-1972). The processes implemented and the results obtained are mainly described using accounts from those who were involved in them, including De Carlo and his primary collaborators, representatives of the commissioning bodies and, in the case of Matteotti, some of the voices of the participants themselves.¹

De Carlo was working on the two projects in 1971 when he delivered the lecture in Melbourne in which he spoke about the realistic utopia.² Both projects were explicitly framed as participatory and can be seen to embody the ambitions contained in the speech. The histories of both projects make clear the political and economic context in which the realistic utopia was drawn up to operate. At the time, experiments in participation at this scale were not unique in Western Europe, where processes of government-controlled planning and production of the built environment coincided with political demand for greater popular involvement in decision making.³ Further to this the projects reveal the complexity of testing and enacting the ideas of the realistic utopia in practice, highlighting contradictions in De Carlo's own processes as well as external factors related to it.

The role of the image as a critical device in both projects is highlighted. The participatory process at Matteotti was conducted in large part through exhibitions, first of provocative precedents and then of the proposed housing and urban design. In Rimini, a complex set of proposals for transforming everything from transport to land tenure was outlined in a set of 'cards' which were presented at large

¹ Both projects have been the subject of book length studies in recent years. Alberto Franchini, *Il Villaggio Matteotti a Terni: Giancarlo De Carlo e l'abitare collettivo* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2020) and Fabio Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini: De Carlo e il Piano del Nuovo Centro (1965-1975)* (Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli, 2012). Due to the timing of the first work, it has not been possible to consult it in detail; instead, the primary source has been the extended feature on Villaggio Matteotti published in *Casabella* which importantly included interviews with stakeholders and quotations from participants alongside articles by De Carlo, the collaborating sociologist Domenico De Masi, and a critical account by Sergio Bracco: Giorgio Muratore, ed., "Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti a Terni: un'esperienza di partecipazione" *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 11-35.

² Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1972).

³ For discussion of the architecture's relations to the European Welfare State see: Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete and Dirk van den Heuvel, eds., *Architecture and the Welfare State* (London: Routledge, 2015). Other key examples of participatory design at the time included the workers' housing redevelopment at Bykker, UK, led by Ralph Erkine and the student housing project la Mémé in Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Belgium, led by Lucien Kroll.

meetings. In his original description of the realistic utopia, De Carlo spoke of his concept of participation as itself a kind of image. By following the actual processes enacted in these two projects, the chapter presents challenges to the ‘image’ of participation, which he had carefully cultivated through his various texts and lectures.

In biographic accounts of De Carlo the two projects mark his first and last attempts at direct participation and have been generally understood as heroic failures.⁴ Matteotti was only partially completed and the Rimini plan was withdrawn before it took any physical form. This chapter re-examines the understanding of the two projects as failures through the lens of the realistic utopia in order to reveal the boundaries of the term’s usefulness. I argue that, in relation to the formulation of the realistic utopia of participation developed through the previous two chapters, these projects can be read as failures on two levels: first, in the multiple ways in which De Carlo’s own process failed to approximate the comprehensive vision of participation laid out in his texts; and second, in the ultimate rejection of the projects—by the commissioning powers in the case of Matteotti, and by a political movement of the citizens themselves in the case of Rimini.

This analysis is related to the central motivation of the realistic utopia, which was to establish and maintain criticality towards those social, political and financial forces that framed each project. Each project was positioned as a search for a critical alternative to existing power relations: between workers and their employers, and between landowners and tenants, respectively. However, the ‘network of forces’ at work in the context is shown to be far more complex than the rather simplistic schema of ‘people’ vs ‘power’ encountered in De Carlo’s texts. Despite these failures, there is some evidence to support De Carlo’s claim that the realistic utopia, as counter-image, ‘can have important effects even if it does not succeed in becoming a reality’ by initiating changes in political procedures, particularly in the case of Matteotti.⁵ Here, the realistic utopia can be seen to have functioned on its own terms, but only in a partial and fragmented way. Ultimately, this underlines the crucial importance of the process of continual iteration of propositions and critiques as described in De Carlo’s original formulation.

⁴ See John McKean, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Layered Places* (Stuttgart: Axel Menges, 2004), 116-117; Benedict Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, (Oxford: Butterworth, 1992), 105-127.

⁵ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 26. This argument is developed using the critical accounts of Sergio Bracco and Manfredo Tafuri.

Villaggio Matteotti: Enacting ‘Process Planning’

In 1969, the same year as the Liège conference from which “Il pubblico” originated, De Carlo began work on his largest housing project to date, the design of the Nuovo Villaggio Matteotti in Terni. The project had its origins in an existing process of political struggle. The workers at the Terni state-owned steelworks had rejected the management’s offer to sell them the dilapidated housing in which they were living and advocated, through the factory councils and trade unions, for the housing to be rebuilt and substantially expanded. De Carlo was approached by the management to solve the problem ‘in terms that were purely technical and therefore unequivocal’.⁶ According to Gianluopo Osti, the director of the Steelworks who first approached De Carlo, ‘the choice of a famous architect was initially motivated also by advertising reasons’.⁷ As the architect and critic Sergio Bracco wrote, it was particularly important in the political context of the time to be able to ‘confirm the label of “the left” on the operation’.⁸ From the outset the image of the architect, as a progressive, technical moderator is emphasised.

De Carlo proposed five options and made his involvement conditional upon acceptance of the low-rise, high density model, the requirement for extensive participation of future residents, and other concessions including a higher budget, provision for collective amenities and, most importantly, that time be set aside during work hours for the workers to attend meetings on the project.⁹ In line with the critical rhetoric of “Il pubblico”, De Carlo adopted an openly antagonistic stance toward his financial client. The designs for the complex were developed through a series of meetings with the future tenants which took place during normal working hours and for which the workers were paid. In these meetings, the representatives of the steel mill were actively excluded in order to allow more authentic discussions with the future inhabitants themselves. In these activities, De Carlo collaborated with sociologist Domenico De Masi and the architect Cesare de’ Seta, who was then in his late 20s.

In 1977, not long after the completion of the project, *Casabella* published an extended feature which provided insight into the project from a wide variety of sources: accounts by De Carlo and De Masi, interviews with former directors of the Terni company and the Municipal administration, and a detailed and critical review of the project and process by Sergio Bracco, as well as a number of unattributed quotes from participants in the process. De Masi’s account described in detail how the project proceeded through 12 ‘phases of intervention’, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

⁶ Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 106.

⁷ ‘Certo la scelta di un architetto famoso fu inizialmente motivata anche da motivi pubblicitari,’ Gianluopo Osti, “Industria, città, ente locale: natura e problemi di un rapporto: Domanda a Gianluopo Osti,” *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 26.

⁸ Sergio Bracco, “Un banco di prova nella conduzione della città,” *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 13.

⁹ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Alla ricerca di un diverso modo di progettare,” *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 17.

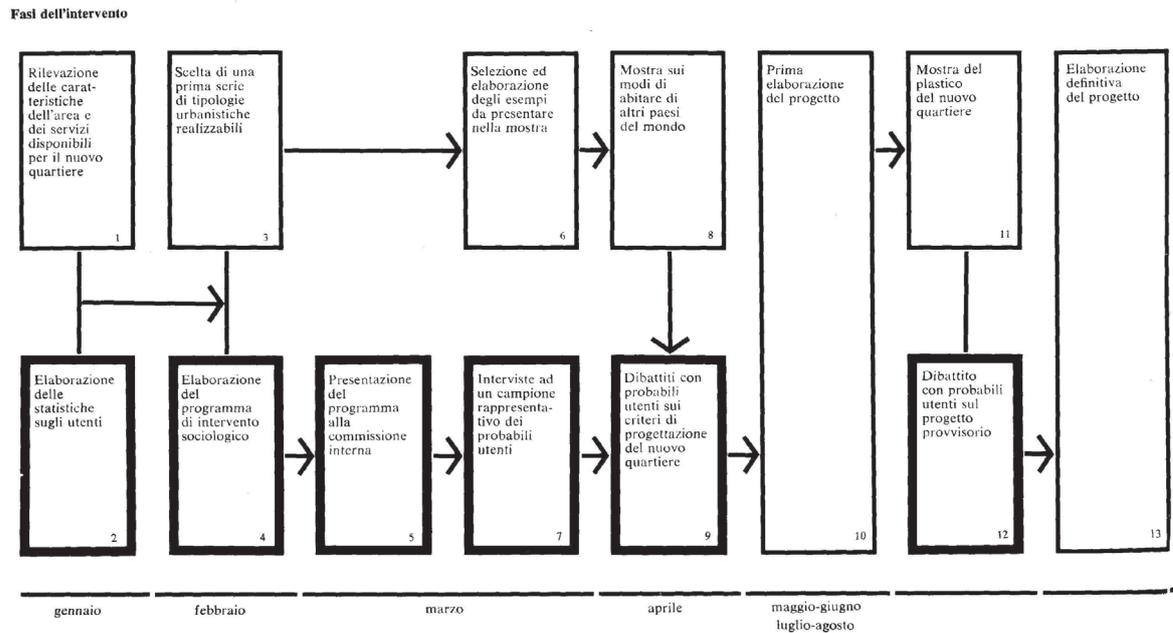


Figure 3.1. Diagram of the ‘phases of intervention’ showing the interaction between the architectural procedures shown in light outline and the ‘sociological’ activities in bold outline. Source: Domenico De Masi. “Sociologia e nuovo ruolo degli utenti”, *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 16.

Both the architect and the sociologist began by analysing the ‘objective’ background of the project. The architect surveyed the physical characteristics and services (phase 1) while the sociologist processed the available statistics on ‘all possible users’ (phase 2).¹⁰ In parallel with De Carlo’s formulation of ‘realisable urban typologies’ (phase 3), De Masi formulated a program of meetings with potential users, which was presented to and approved by the internal commission (phases 4-5). This was followed by the first real interaction with the potential inhabitants themselves. As the housing was to be allocated only after its construction, it was not possible to work with the actual future residents; instead, all 1800 workers in need of housing were invited to participate.¹¹ De Masi conducted interviews (phase 7) with a ‘representative sample of 100 people’ which ‘highlighted the needs regarding the size and type of housing; the problems of traffic, greenery and free time; neighbourhood life, social services, relations with the workplace, the city, the region, etc.’¹² At this point, the conservative attitudes of the workers regarding possible architectural models were noted, and this influenced the next step of the intervention.

¹⁰ Domenico De Masi, “Sociologia e nuovo ruolo degli utenti,” *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 16.

¹¹ De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

¹² De Masi, “Sociologica,” 16

Here De Carlo made the first move in what could be understood as the critical use of images in the project in an exhibition of ‘significant projects’ that illustrated ‘different modes of living’ from those already present in Terni (Figure 3.2).¹³ Examples shown included Roehampton Estate in the UK and Seidlung Halen in Switzerland.¹⁴



Figure 3.2. De Carlo speaking at the opening of the initial exhibition of alternative housing types at Terni, February 1970. Source: Benedict Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo* (Oxford: Butterworth, 1992), 107.

Following the exhibition (phases 6, 8), which De Carlo intended as a ‘trigger’, the design team staged a series of meetings (phase 9) where ‘[m]any hundreds of people of all ages gave rise to a lively debate that lasted for several days and which, through a precious exchange of experiences between technicians and the population, allowed both of them to design the houses and the neighbourhood together, agreeing on the basic criteria and requirements’.¹⁵ The design work was then conducted in De Carlo’s offices over a period of several months (phase 10) before ‘resum[ing] dialogue’ with the users (phase 11). The debate (phase 12) focussed almost exclusively on the individual dwellings, for which a series of different typologies, each with variants, had already been designed. Following this discussion, the designs were finalised for construction.

¹³ De Masi, “Sociologica.” 16.

¹⁴ Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 107.

¹⁵ De Masi, “Sociologica,” 16.

The final design produced by De Carlo and his collaborators Fausto Colombo and Valeria Bellani was, as promised, a low-rise, high-density model of housing. The ‘structure’ of the urban plan was principally concerned with separating pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The units were arranged in five lines. Because De Carlo was keen to reduce vehicular traffic ‘to the minimum necessary’, it was limited to one side of each building row as a ‘channel’ giving access to garages hidden below raised pedestrian pathways. Condensing the traffic in this way allowed the alternating building sides to remain free for pedestrian walkways and communal gardens. Bridges over the vehicular channels completed a network of pedestrian movement and connected directly to a series of small communal facilities (meeting room, kindergarten and library). The intention here is more legible in the complete four-phase plan, where they connect to a much more substantial communal centre (Figure 3.3).

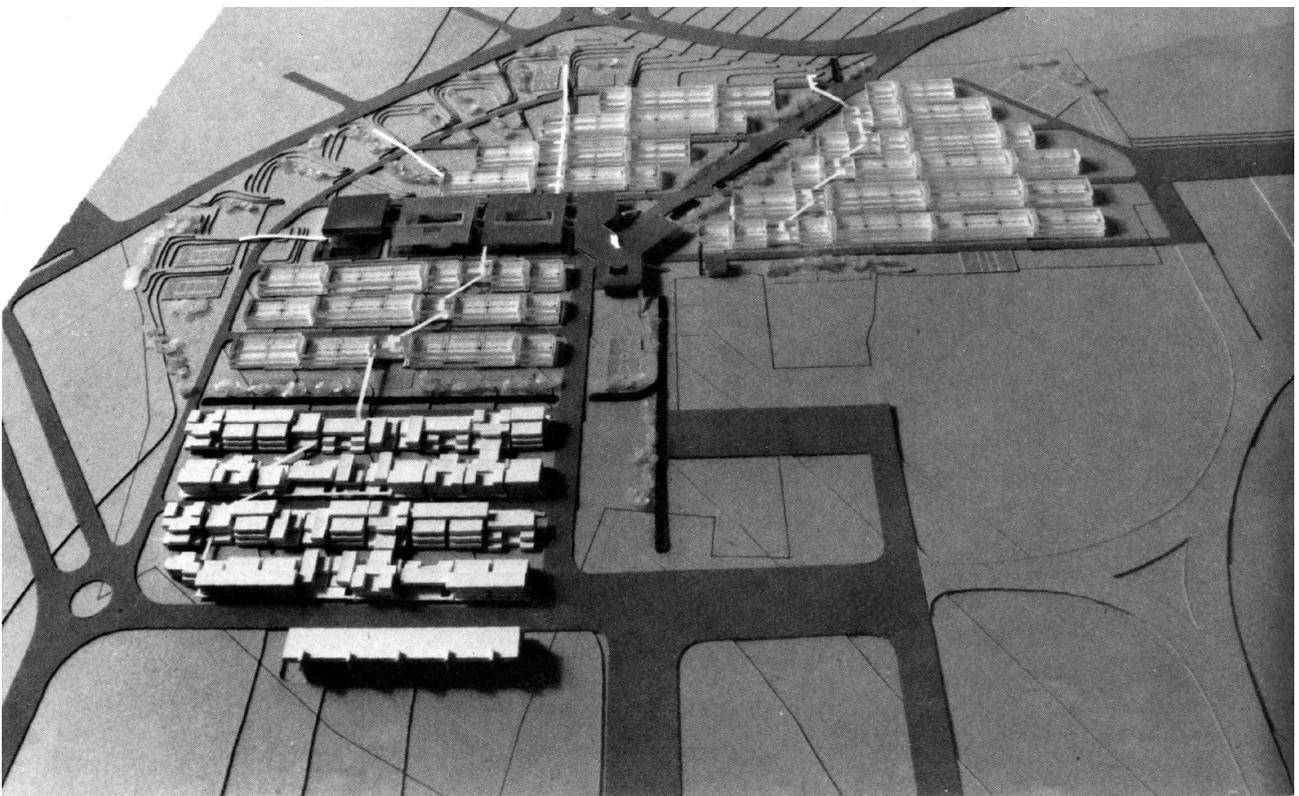


Figure 3.3. A model of the full four-phase plan of the reconstruction of Villaggio Matteotti. In the foreground is the completed ‘first phase’, built of light-coloured card and consisting of, from the front, the ‘type 4’ single person apartments, separated by a road from four rows of the variable 5 typology clusters. Beyond this, shown as transparent plastic, are the intended subsequent three phases, with details to be determined by future inhabitants. The four larger dark buildings in the centre were to be a centre of collective facilities at the terminus of the raised pedestrian pathways. Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, “Alla ricerca di un diverso modo di progettare”, *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 18.

This interlaced system of movement frames the ‘fields’ for the apartments. These were developed to be ‘né frammentaria né a blocca’ (neither detached nor as slabs), with highly articulated, staggered forms created by the stacking of three distinct unit plans through the section.¹⁶ Five apartment building typologies were

¹⁶ Suzanne Mulder, “Villaggio Matteotti housing estate, Terni 1969-74,” in *Team 10: 1953-81, in Search of a Utopia of the Present*, eds. Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel (Rotterdam: NAI, 2005), 220.

developed (Fig. 3.4): type 1 consisted of three split-level apartments clustered around a lightwell (Fig.3.5); type 2 was a variation on the first with a different structure to the gardens; type 3 consisted of an ‘L’ shape with all units on single levels and with allowance for a small shop; type 3TR was a variation that allowed for a break in the building mass; type 5 was a special solution for the front corner of the development. All the units had a private outdoor terrace, with access via open stairs and ramps to provide a more ‘individual’ sense of address. An additional typology ‘4’ consisted of unvaried apartments for singles and was separated from the rest of the development by a road.

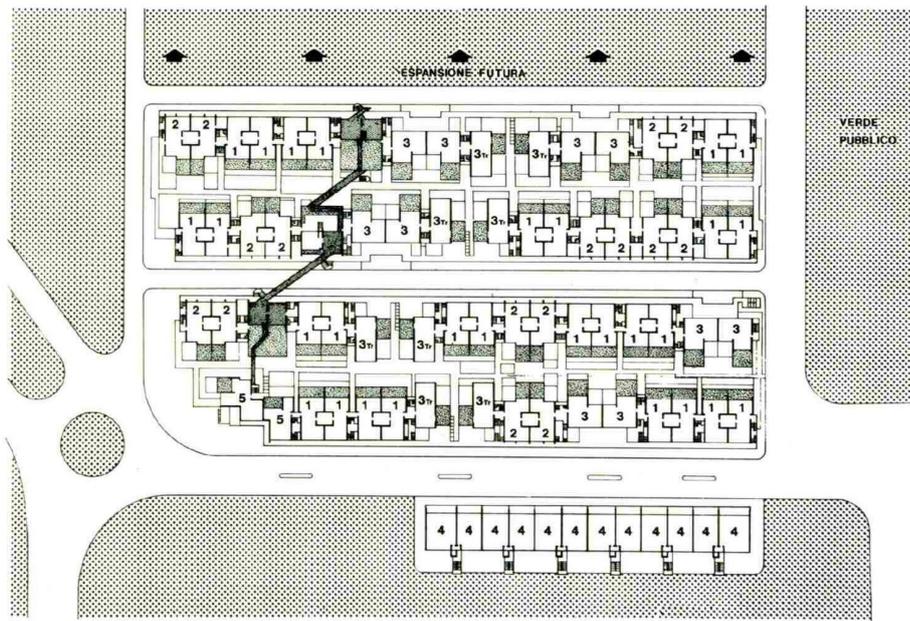


Figure 3.4. First floor plan of Villaggio Matteotti Stage 1, showing the arrangement of building types. Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 21.

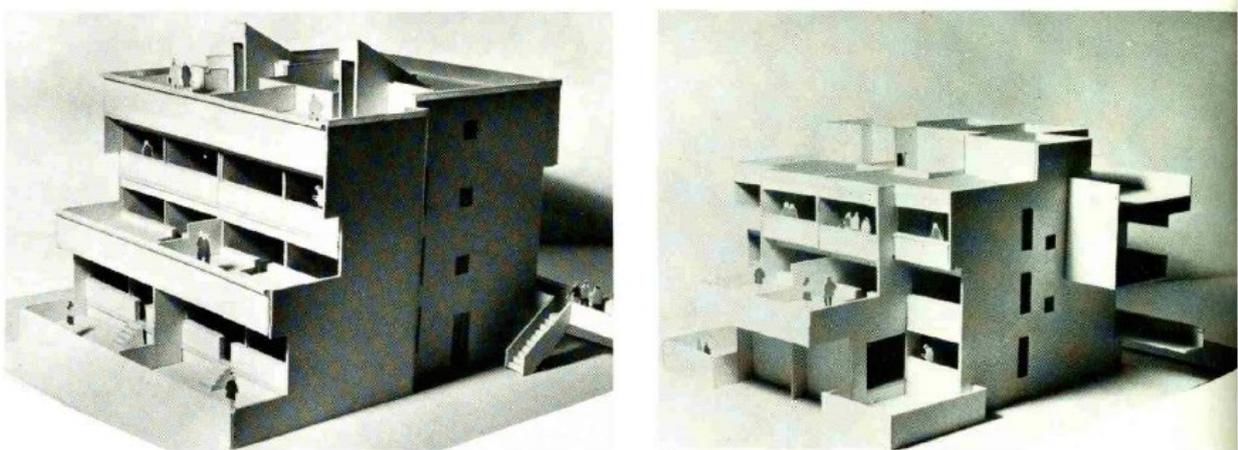


Figure 3.5. Large scale models of the building types were produced for discussions with residents. Pictured here are Type 1 (left) and Type 2 (right). Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 22.

According to De Carlo, these types had been developed from the original discussion of different family needs, and the number and composition of the types was again determined by the users: ‘the problem of the composition of the whole did not arise even in the first phase because the frequency and placement of the different cells was determined by the choices of the users’.¹⁷ However, the determination of which of the 1800 families would benefit from the scheme was only made during construction, too late for them to ‘choose’ specific units. Although this is not clarified in De Carlo’s account, it can be assumed that the ‘choices’ may have been more in the nature of representative ‘preferences’. For Emilio Ripanti, one of the Terni company directors, the situation in which all workers were initially involved in general discussions, rather than only those guaranteed of a house, resulted in a richer discussion of collective needs over merely individual ones.¹⁸ In any case, the composition of the types clearly relied on ‘technicians’ making many choices, as certain ‘structural’ elements (such as the shops of type 3, the breaks of type 3TR, and the ‘special’ corner of type 5) were all in some respects necessary beyond user preferences.

In describing the diversity of possible living arrangements, De Carlo used a biological analogy, with the apartment buildings referred to as ‘cells’ and the individual units as ‘nuclei’. Each of the five apartment building types provided the choice of three different unit types. Within each unit, a further three layout variations were developed with the actual future residents, who had managed to get them designated when the buildings were still in construction.¹⁹ This created the possibility of forty-five alternative solutions for the two hundred and fifty dwellings built in the first phase.²⁰ De Carlo went on to describe how, in the subsequent three stages, these types could be ‘chosen from a catalogue’ with the possibility to continue to amend, adapt and substitute new types ‘suggested by the experience of use and [...] a new tuning of needs with new future users’.²¹

In Bracco’s assessment, the ‘reality’ of participation evident through the design process is unclear. He notes the strong architectural language, despite De Carlo’s claim to interpret the expressions of others: ‘the ambiguity of the operation is evident, and it is difficult to understand the boundary between participation, subtle persuasion, mutual indifference’.²² In Bracco’s account, things only got worse from here: ‘The participatory equilibrium, so problematically composed, is lost at the moment of

¹⁷ De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

¹⁸ Emilio Ripanti, “Industria, città, ente locale: natura e problemi di un rapporto: Domanda a Emilio Ripanti,” *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 28.

¹⁹ De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

²⁰ De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

²¹ [E]liminate o suggerite dall'esperienza dell'uso e con l'ulteriore aggiunta di quelle che scaturiranno da una nuova messa a punto dei bisogni con i nuovi futuri utenti.’ De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

²² ‘Ma qui l'ambiguità dell'operazione è manifesta, ed è difficile capire quale sia il confine fra partecipazione, sottile persuasione, indifferenza reciproca.’ Bracco, “Un banco di prova,” 14.

construction'.²³ The Steelworks had chosen a state-owned construction company to build the development. In stark contrast to De Carlo's stated aim in "Il pubblico" that 'all barriers between builders and users must be abolished',²⁴ at Matteotti not only were the future inhabitants excluded from oversight of the construction works, but so too was De Carlo himself as 'the relationship between client and architect deteriorated to the point that De Carlo was considered an unwelcome guest on the site'.²⁵ The acrimony of the financial client was in many respects openly invited by De Carlo who, upon accepting the commission, 'immediately declares his role "against" Terni Steelworks, who were the actual client'. Osti, the director of the Steelworks at the time, reported being annoyed by this rhetorically antagonistic stance: 'he held meetings with the assignees as if he were a leader of the masses in the conquest of the Bastille'.²⁶ This was despite the fact that the Steelworks was actively facilitating the process. When the municipal administration and factory management changed from Socialist to conservative Fanfani, all desire to continue the project beyond the first stage of 240 apartments evaporated.

More troubling for De Carlo's political stance was the report by Bracco that, at the conclusion of the participatory planning process, the neighbourhood committee proposed, a self-managed rehabilitation plan for existing homes, as an alternative to the overall plan of Terni which received 98% of the support of the inhabitants.²⁷ In this case, the intervention of the Factory Council and Trade Union ensured the continuance of De Carlo's proposal. This reliance on representative authority rather than the people themselves highlights a real conflict for De Carlo in terms of his rhetoric on participation. While it is certainly understandable that the existing residents would naturally prefer to renovate their existing homes rather than be squeezed in with many others, it nonetheless added another level of complexity to the rather simplistic 'people vs power' schema sometimes suggested by De Carlo's writing.²⁸

Dispersed throughout the *Casabella* feature are 29 unattributed quotes, presumably from the participants themselves. However, no contextualising information is provided, leaving us to wonder if they are from original interviews by De Masi, debates with De Carlo or some other event. Although the criteria for inclusion of the quotes are not made transparent, they are nevertheless a rich source of views on both the design of the housing and the process enacted by De Carlo. They range in length from a single line to a full paragraph; one appears to include multiple voices. A plurality of perspectives is evident. Some

²³ 'L'equilibrio partecipativo, così problematicamente composto, si disperde al momento della costruzione.' Bracco, "Un banco di prova," 14.

²⁴ De Carlo, "Il Pubblico," 10.

²⁵ '[I] rapporti fra committente e architetto si deteriorano al punto che De Carlo è considerato ospite non gradito sul cantiere.' Bracco, "Un banco di prova," 14.

²⁶ '[C]ome quando faceva le riunioni con gli assegnatari quasi fosse un condottiero delle masse alla conquista della Bastiglia.' Osti, "Domanda," 26.

²⁷ Bracco, "Un banco di prova," 14.

²⁸ The issue of over-simplified understandings of the power structures at play in participatory projects of architecture are discussed as a wider critique of participatory practices in Chapter 5.

describe the dilapidated nature of the existing dwellings,²⁹ others are keen to maintain the rural characteristics of the settlement.³⁰ In commenting on the process, many engage with the 'economic' issues that underlie the project:

I personally came here, I enjoyed making these speeches, I accepted it positively, I fully agree with the positivity of the method, but I could be one of the excluded: that is, I could exclude myself as the house that I judged suitable, ideal, I can't afford it for economic reasons.³¹

Others note the absence of women in the discussion, indicating that while they were happy to discuss the economic problems, they should discuss issues associated with 'the bathroom, the kitchen, the corridors, the entrance, etc.' with their wives.³² At the neighbourhood scale, some highlight the need for a school, others speak of the requirement for public space:

Regardless of what we do inside the steel mill, when we go out we are tired. In addition to the internal house having to be comfortable, the external house must also be comfortable and here I would like to mention the gardens and greenery which is an important thing because we all have children and we must give them the possibility of recreation and space for games.³³

²⁹ 'I am of the opinion that everything must be built new, it must be done well, everything clean and not like now, for that I can't wait: the houses are all stone, there is no entrance, so hot and so cold, animals can go inside because there are holes like that, water coming over your bed. You should see, it sucks. Mold on the walls.'

(Io sono del parere che deve essere costruito tutto nuovo, deve essere fatto perbene, tutto pulito e non come adesso che io non vedo l'ora : le case sono tutte stonacate, non c'è un ingresso, tanto caldo e tanto freddo, animali che entrano dentro perché ci sono delle buche così, acqua che ti viene sopra il letto. Lei dovrebbe vederle, uno schifo. La muffa sulle pareti.) Unattributed quote, "Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti a Terni: un'esperienza di partecipazione," Casabella 421 (January 1977): 13.

³⁰ 'we live, we can say, in an agricultural way, but these are habits that we have had for about 30 years. In short, now I have the garage and the car and the motorcycle fit in; I have the fireplace that I made as everyone did; I have my cellar with my press and my machine: these are things that fall [?], we fully agree, but to have only an apartment, go down the stairs and being immediately on public land means destroying all the habits we have made.'

(viviamo, possiamo dire, in modo agricolo, però sono abitudini che noi abbiamo da circa 30 anni. Insomma, ora io ho il garage e ci entra la macchina e la motocicletta; ho il camino che ho fatto io come lo hanno fatto tutti; ho la mia cantina con il mio torchio e la mia macchinetta: queste sono cose che cadono, siamo pienamente d'accordo, però avere solo un appartamento, scendere le scale e stare subito sul suolo pubblico, significa distruggere tutte le abitudini che ci siamo fatte.) Unattributed quote, "Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti," 34.

³¹ 'io personalmente sono venuto qui, mi è piaciuto fare questi discorsi, l'ho accettato positivamente, concordo pienamente con la positività del metodo , ma potrei essere uno degli esclusi: cioè mi potrei escludere in quanto la casa che ho giudicato idonea , ideale, non posso permetterla per ragioni economiche.' Unattributed quote, "Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti," 14.

³² 'These problems, more than with us, you should discuss them with our wives, with our women, because they are problems that interest them more than us. Terni can discuss the economic side with us; but as far as the house itself is concerned, it is the woman, who lives 24 hours inside the house, who must discuss it: how she wants the bathroom, the kitchen, the corridors, the entrance, etc. to be arranged. At least I see it that way.'

(Questi problemi più che con noi , li dovrete discutere con le nostre mogli, con le nostre donne, perché sono problemi che interessano più lo ro che noi. Con noi la Terni può discute re la parte economica; ma per quanto riguarda la casa in se stessa, è la donna, che vive 24 ore dentro casa, che deve discuterne: come vuole la sistemazione del bagno, della cucina, dei corridoi, dell 'ingresso, ecc . Io, perlomeno, la vedo in qu esta maniera.) Unattributed quote, "Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti," 14.

³³ 'Indipendentemente da quello che facciamo dentro l'acciaieria, quando usciamo siamo stanchi. Oltre a dover essere confortevole la casa interna, deve essere confortevole anche la casa esterna e qui vorrei accennare ai giardini e al verde che è una cosa importante perché tutti abbiamo dei figli e bisogna dargli la possibilità di svago e spazio per i giochi.' Unattributed quote, "Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti," 16.

They also refer to needs for privacy in the form of individual balconies, garages, gardens and entries.³⁴ The validity of the needs themselves is contested, with attitudes ranging from apathy (“the house will be what the house will be”), pragmatic self-effacement (“The dining room for us workers is a dead expense”) to egalitarian fervour (“Oh! my needs are like those of the director and also of the President of the Republic: I don't care about Terni, I say my needs”).³⁵ Different spatial arrangements are debated and different voices support or reject particular architectural strategies, such as movable walls.³⁶ These quotes, placed in italics to the side of the ‘established’ voices of critic, sociologist, architect, company director, municipal administrator, etc., come closest to providing unfiltered evidence of the actual experience of the participants, albeit in a highly curated form. De Carlo had not had an editorial role at the magazine since 1957, and it is difficult to discern a particular direction of editorial control in the selection of quotes. Many seem to support his claim about the importance of accommodating needs for privacy, gardens, garages and so forth. Equal numbers challenge his design and polemic. However, if we assume that they are in fact taken from his discussions with them, they reveal his success in instigating a very open process that not only concerned the proposed architecture, but also touched on much broader social, political, programmatic and poetic concerns.

Matteotti and the Realistic Utopia

The precise use of the ‘architectural image’ is central to De Carlo’s notion of the realistic utopia. Bracco describes De Carlo’s process at Matteotti as explicitly operating through the image: ‘De Carlo offers the alternatives “in terms of images” with models, drawings and explanations.’³⁷ This was enacted primarily through a series of exhibitions. At first, these exhibitions consisted of plans and photographs of ‘alternative’ housing types not found in Italy. Later, they comprised drawings and large-scale interactive models of the proposed dwelling types (Figure 3.6). It is in this format that Sara Marini identifies the presence of the realistic utopia:

³⁴ Unattributed quotes from participants at Matteotti, “Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti,” 22 (private balconies), 28 private garages, 34 (private gardens), 28 (private entries).

³⁵ “[L]a casa sarà quello che sarà, cose straordinarie non se ne vogliono, si cercano case senza eccessi e di poterle abitare al più presto possibile’ – ‘La sala per noi operai è una spesa morta: è in cucina che si svolge la vita della famiglia tutti i giorni’ - ‘oh! le esigenze mie sono come quelle del direttore e anche del Presidente della Repubblica: a me della Terni non me ne importa niente, io dico le esigenze mie.’ Unattributed quotes from participants at Matteotti, “Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti,” 22, 35.

³⁶ ‘A large room that can be divided with a sliding door, which is used for cooking and eating.’ (Una stanza grande che si può dividere con uno scorrevole, che serve così per cucinare e per mangiare.) Unattributed quote, “Il nuovo villaggio Matteotti,” 23.

³⁷ ‘De Carlo offre le alternative «in termini di immagini» con plastici, disegni e spiegazioni, spingendo a formulare giudizi autonomi sulle proposte’ Bracco, “Un banco di prova,” 14.

In the second exhibition of 1973 the project of the Matteotti Village is exhibited at different scales, through different materials to let future inhabitants know, before living it, the spatial translation of their wishes. The architecture of participation is thus told and experienced as a *realistic utopia*.³⁸



Figure 3.6. Potential future residents review 1:20 scale models of the proposed apartment types. Source: Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, 107.

While the sociologist De Masi had begun his participatory interventions with interviews, De Carlo had begun his interaction through images. Images here were intended to ‘set up the talks’.³⁹ This is consistent with De Carlo’s claim in “Il pubblico” that “[t]he job of the planner is to open the sequence of hypotheses enlarging the image beyond the margins of the framework imposed by the client: to show what we could

³⁸ ‘Nella seconda mostra del 1973 viene esposto il progetto del Villaggio Matteotti alle differenti scale, attraverso diversi materiali per far conoscere ai futuri abitanti, prima di viverla, la traduzione spaziale dei loro desiderata. L’architettura della partecipazione è così raccontata e vissuta come *utopia realistica*.’ Sara Marini, “Introduzione: Scegliere la parte,” in *L’architettura della partecipazione*, ed. Sara Marini (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015), 14.

³⁹ ‘Per impostare i colloqui si partiva con una mostra di tipi edilizi che si consideravano accettabili, scelti nella produzione di vari Paesi e non necessariamente di basso costo. Si trattava di spostare subito l’attenzione su modelli diversi da quelli che vengono normalmente offerti, e che condizionano l’immaginazione popolare.’ De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

(should) have if instead of moving within a condition of preordained subjection we moved according to an objective confrontation with real rights'.⁴⁰ De Carlo describes how, following the exhibition, 'the discussion remained fixed for a long time on the background of the problem, which was attacked with authentic anger in all its human, economic and political aspects'.⁴¹ Through the realistic utopia, De Carlo had outlined how counter-images can be used to uncover existing conflicts and contradictions and to stimulate a reappraisal of 'rights which no-one had dared to demand'.⁴² Here we see De Carlo framing the exhibition to include models 'not necessarily of low cost' and, in subsequent debates, using terms close to those in "Il pubblico", namely, asking 'why' housing should be as cheap as possible and not, for example, rather expensive'.⁴³ He intends the images of various international case studies to serve as the very first 'hypothesis', aimed at bringing the 'real need' of the user into the discussion. It should be noted however that both the urban typology of high-density low-rise featured in the exhibition and the stipulation that the budget be 15% higher than the standardised state funding model were agreed by the Steelworks as conditions for De Carlo's participation; that is to say, they were set prior to the initiation of any participatory discourse, rather than being a product of it.

De Carlo framed the use of images in the project as a vehicle for critical confrontation. This aligns it with his formulation of mutual critique articulated in "Il pubblico" as the formulation of hypotheses. This is evident in the initial 'exhibition' of alternative models of housing, which was intended to address the workers' view of housing options as being limited to traditional forms.⁴⁴ For De Carlo, the aim was 'to make conflicts explode from the very first movement with a disruptive trigger'.⁴⁵ In some respects, this first exhibition can be seen as a belated response to Wogensky's advice regarding Matera at Otterlo in 1959: dealing with the 'difficult task' of educating those who 'have not received an education into the new plastic relationships of our epoch' and seeking to 'introduce this new plastic expression, and fight to make it clear and understandable to them'.⁴⁶ While his intention was perhaps not to instruct, there does seem to be a desire to educate in order to raise consciousness of alternatives; to create a more 'open' discussion.

⁴⁰ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 98.

⁴¹ '[L]a discussione restava fissa a lungo sul retroscena del problema, che veniva aggredito con rabbia autentica in tutti i suoi aspetti umani, politici, economici' De Carlo, "Alla ricerca," 18.

⁴² De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 26.

⁴³ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 7.

⁴⁴ The description of the conservative attitudes of the workers is referred to as the 'tile problem' by Domenico De Masi in Sara Catenacci, 'Maieutica del progetto. Riccardo Dalisi tra architettura, design e "animazione," 1967-1974,' *L'Uomo Nero*, anno XII, no. 11-12 (May 2015): 187.

⁴⁵ '[P]er fare esplodere i conflitti fin dal primo movimento con un innesco dirompente.' De Carlo, "Alla ricerca," 18.

⁴⁶ André Wogensky, "Discussion," in *Documents of Modern Architecture: CLAM '59 in Otterlo*, ed. Jürgen Joedicke, Oscar Newman (London: Alec Tirani, Stuttgart: Karl Kramer, 1961), 90.

While this exercise fits De Carlo's rhetoric in one direction, it does not seem to have allowed much in the way of reciprocal critique of the architect by the users. In "Il pubblico" De Carlo had described the process of identifying user needs as 'a preliminary activity of information and criticism aimed at exposing all the imposed value systems'. Although there is some evidence of this activity being directed towards the perceived ignorance of workers in relation to alternative housing types, it is difficult to discern much evidence of any reciprocal 'rebound of new information and criticism' capable of 'risking the very cultural structures (experiences, values and codes) of those who set off the process'.⁴⁷ De Carlo described the debate following the exhibition: 'the conflict promptly exploded immediately questioning the objectives of the operation and forcing everyone - and above all those who conducted the operation: the designer, the sociologist - to discover their cards'.⁴⁸ Tellingly, he offered no specific examples of how the sociologists and designer questioned their own 'cultural structures' beyond what they had already committed to.

The extent to which potential users could actually influence the form of the architecture has been persistently questioned by those seeking to evaluate the results of participatory projects of architecture. At Matteotti, the design of the buildings could be seen to respond directly to the demands of the users which De Carlo and his team had learned during their discussions. Desires for 'traditional' elements, such as private entries, private gardens and private garages, can all be argued to have modified what may have begun as a more collectivist design. However, as Bracco notes, these elements could just as easily be attributed to conversations with Bakema or the Smithsons as to discussions with the workers at Terni.⁴⁹ Naomi Miller made similar observations in her review of the development for *Progressive Architecture* in 1976, which for her posed fundamental questions regarding the line between architect and user: 'How much of the Terni housing reflects the demands and needs of the workers and how much the conception of the architect?'.⁵⁰ Her assessment is that, while De Carlo was 'capable of educating the people in the

⁴⁷ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 12.

⁴⁸ 'Il conflitto infatti puntualmente esplodeva mettendo subito in questione gli obiettivi dell'operazione e costringendo tutti - e soprattutto chi conduceva l'operazione: il progettista, il sociologo - a scoprire le loro carte,' De Carlo, "Alla ricerca," 18.

⁴⁹ 'Some user requests, dictated by the habit of a traditional habitat, become reasons for distributive and formal definition. Thus, it was decided to use only three floors for the residence, as higher volumes "make you lose the perception of the building." Thus it is established that each house will have a single entrance, not in a standardized staircase, and this is called articulated access solutions between roads and flights of stairs considered as extensions of the roads. Furthermore, the required green areas contiguous to each housing unit suggest the solution of large sloping terraces and garden roofs. Participation therefore seems to become an instrument for defining architectural characteristics (is it a coincidence that they are linked to the researches of the Smithsons or Bakema of the 1960s?).'

(Alcune richieste degli utenti, dettate dall'abitudine a un habitat tradizionale, diventano motivi di definizione distributiva e formale. Così, viene deciso di utilizzare solo tre piani per la residenza, in quanto volumi più alti «fanno perdere la percezione dell'edificio.» Si stabilisce così che ogni casa avrà un ingresso singolo, non in un corpo scala standardizzato, e ciò detta articolate soluzioni d'accesso fra strade e rampe di scale considerate come prolungamenti delle strade. Ancora, le aree verdi richieste contigue ad ogni unità abitativa suggeriscono la soluzione di grandi terrazze digradanti e di tetti giardino. La partecipazione sembra quindi diventare strumento per definire anche caratteristiche architettoniche (è un caso che esse si riallaccino alle ricerche degli Smithson o di Bakema degli anni '60?)) Bracco, "Un banco di prova," 14.

⁵⁰ Naomi Miller, "Participatory Design: Case Study. Housing Development Matteotti of Giancarlo De Carlo," *Progressive Architecture* 12 (1976): 74.

tenets of an ideology that could be adapted to their needs', the end result was that 'the users had the illusion that they were an essential part of the decision-making process, when in fact, the formal aspects of the whole derive from the understanding and expertise of the architect'.⁵¹ Here the 'image' of participation takes on a quite different meaning, as a veneer to cover an otherwise unaltered project.

De Masi describes 'from a sociological point of view' the two extremes of a continuum ranging from designing 'without accepting any mediation with future users' to acting solely as the users' 'technical arm' without daring to 'influence in any way' the design.⁵² While he does not position De Carlo explicitly along this continuum, the implication is that a balanced position is preferable. De Masi's final assessment is that the process enacted for Matteotti did achieve some kind of balance: 'we are still very far from a total self-management of the project by the users, but we are already just as far from an exclusive imposition by the designer. The merit of the operation lies precisely in this research effort and in the awareness of its limits'.⁵³ De Carlo describes the process somewhat differently: once 'clarity' had been achieved from the discussions, an interconnected design process, working simultaneously at the urban and typological level, could commence.⁵⁴ However, it is not clear if this kind of 'design process' is taking place with the workers in Terni or in his office in Milan. Regardless, it is clear that the process enacted for the design of Matteotti can be considered at best an initial, tentative step towards participation. While this may cause some disquiet in evaluations of the projects, it should be remembered that De Carlo's conception of participation was intended to be broader than involvement in form-making and should, rather, be directed towards the true articulation of needs. In De Carlo's theorisations of participation, he never stated an explicit intention for the users to control the design of the forms, maintaining the importance of a strong role for the specific expertise of the architect in this regard. In some ways, the questions raised by Bracco and Miller reflect a more limited understanding of the 'place' of participation, as something that happens only within the process of designing forms. In "Il pubblico", De Carlo is explicitly seeking to extend understanding of participation beyond this, to become a much larger conversation related to 'motivations and consequences', actual needs and actual use.

In this respect, the process enacted in Terni remains for De Carlo partial and limited, not because of his own control over the design process, but because of the lack of continuity between the design process and the phase of 'control and use', the lessons from which would feed-back into the next round of articulation of needs. For De Carlo, the exclusion of the workers (and himself) from the construction site disrupted this continuity. More problematic, however, was the lack of political will to continue the project

⁵¹ Miller, "Participatory Design," 74.

⁵² De Masi, "Sociologica," 15.

⁵³ 'Come si può vedere, siamo ancora molto lontani da una totale autogestione del progetto da parte degli utenti, ma siamo già altrettanto lontani da una esclusiva imposizione da parte del progettista.' De Masi, "Sociologica," 15.

⁵⁴ De Carlo, "Alla ricerca," 18.

beyond its first stage. In his descriptions of ‘process planning’, the activity of design ‘does not end with the construction of the architectural object’. Rather, ‘[a]n intensification at this point would be very important, to record the feedback and carry out the operation while continuing to correct it’.⁵⁵ He had intended that in ‘the next phase, the accommodations can be chosen from a catalogue that includes the alternative solutions of the first phase; fewer or more that will have been eliminated or suggested by the experience of use and with the further addition of those that will arise from a new tuning of needs with future users’.⁵⁶ It was only at the fourth and ‘presumably’ last phase that he saw the designer taking a back seat: ‘where the designer’s contribution will consist not in the composition of the whole but in the study of its junctions and its adjustment in relation to the spatial lattice of the grid’.⁵⁷ In De Carlo’s formulation, it is necessary for the realistic utopia to iterate so that the ongoing process of discovery, formulation and use leads to the next cycle of discovery. Here again, however, we are directed to raise questions about the fragment of the design process that De Carlo was able to enact, from which there seems to be a noticeable absence of the kind of intensive iteration of images or design hypothesis, being limited to a relatively few moments of proposition and critique.

In comparison to the process of design described by De Carlo in “Il pubblico” as the ‘formulation of hypotheses’, the design process that took place in Matteotti would appear not to have reached the height of his own rhetoric. There, De Carlo described a ‘dialectical process in which reality expands continuously under the solicitation of the images and the images become more and more diversified with the inclusion of new expansions of reality’.⁵⁸ Each image of the design, formulated by the architect as a realistic utopia, was intended to once more call into question its founding principles and engineer its own replacement by a more fitting ‘hypothesis’. The imagined process was an intense and extended period of design activity, operating through continual cycles of proposition and critique. In the process at Matteotti, this appears in a reduced and much less dramatic form. De Carlo begins with the international precedents, which generate what appears to be the most wide-ranging discussion, in which many (verbal) hypotheses were presumably raised, debated, replaced and refined. Following this, the process appears to become very streamlined. The user needs that have been ‘scientifically detected’ by De Masi are neatly translated into a design formulation.⁵⁹ When it is brought back for debate after months of design work away from Terni, the larger questions of urban design (let alone budget, location, rights and relationships) appear to have been settled once and for all and the discussion moves to filling in the interiors.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 98.

⁵⁶ ‘Nella fase successiva gli alloggi potranno essere scelti in un catalogo che comprende le soluzioni alternative della prima fase; meno o più quelle che saranno state eliminate o suggerite dall’esperienza dell’uso e con l’ulteriore aggiunta di quelle che scaturiranno da una nuova messa a punto dei bisogni con i nuovi futuri utenti’ De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

⁵⁷ ‘[D]ove l’apporto del progettista consisterà non nella composizione dell’insieme ma nello studio delle sue giunzioni e nel suo aggiustamento in rapporto al reticolo spaziale della griglia.’ De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

⁵⁸ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 12.

⁵⁹ De Masi, “Sociologica,” 15.

⁶⁰ De Masi, “Sociologica,” 15; De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

Although the project achieves ambiguous results in terms of the authenticity of participation, and certainly was unable to enact the iterative process of use informing future design, it can be said to succeed in at least some of the terms of the realistic utopia, albeit in only a single step. Writing in the early 80s, Manfredo Tafuri notes the way in which, although the architectural process ceased following the change in administration and subsequent abandonment of future stages, the true legacy of De Carlo's approach was the social and political development of the workers, who became increasingly organised and vocal regarding their desires.⁶¹ This is confirmed by Bracco, who reported at the time: 'In 1974 the requests of the factory committee and of the trade unions involved in the restructuring decisions of the plants are also motivated by the right to participate acquired with the events in the Matteotti village'.⁶² In this way, the participatory process itself is an 'image' which 'feeds back' into society, here in the form of ongoing political action. In terms of the realistic utopia, this was the project's most important success, to 'trigger consequences' beyond the architecture itself.⁶³

The *Casabella* feature reveals that the project can be considered in some ways a 'failed' project of participation in De Carlo's terms. This is most clearly evident in the discontinuation of the 'experiment' that constituted the first stage of the restructuring of Matteotti. Further, it raises significant doubt as to how genuinely the participatory process was enacted and, at the very least, presents some significant challenges to De Carlo's rhetorical position. Yet this very critical exercise highlights certain ways in which the project does succeed in the terms set out by De Carlo in "Il pubblico" and *An Architecture of Participation*. The focus has shifted from the architectural object as isolated form to the process by which it is made, which in *Casabella* becomes the main topic of discussion and critique. Even more significantly, it directs attention to the users and inhabitants of the building, allowing them not only a 'presence' but also a voice, albeit a rather opaque and fragmented one.

Rimini: The 'Utopian Residue'

The preceding analysis of the process at Matteotti revealed the use of the realistic utopia, understood as an image used to simultaneously critique a situation and propose its alternative. It was found to be only partially effective within the design process due to its rather one-sided implementation of critique.

⁶¹ Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, trans. Jessica Irvine (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 121.

⁶² Bracco, "Un banco di prova," 14.

⁶³ 'The initiated process, then, if it does not resolve its participatory role in the direct construction of the neighborhood, triggers consequences of collective importance in other locations. Perhaps this, outside the myth of participation, is the most valid contribution of the operation so suffered, it should be said, by De Carlo.'

(Il processo innescato, allora, se non risolve nella diretta costruzione del quartiere la propria carica partecipativa, fa scattare in altre sedi conseguenze di importanza collettiva. E' forse que sto, fuori dal mito della partecipazione, il contributo più valido dell'operazione così sofferta, è il caso di dirlo, da De Carlo.) Bracco, "Un banco di prova"14.

Crucially lacking was the intense iteration of images, which was reduced to only a few encounters and was prevented from continuing past the moment of use. Despite this, it was found to have some efficacy in moving beyond architecture itself, in contributing to greater levels of political advocacy amongst residents and greater attention to matters of process and participation from the architectural community. This section continues to explore the realistic utopia in De Carlo's practice through an analysis of the concurrent and even more ambitious project for the restructuring of the Rimini City Centre. The use of images was also of central importance in this project.

The Rimini plan can be regarded as De Carlo's largest scale attempt to implement his formulation of participation and, in a similar way to Matteotti, can be seen as an experimental application of the realistic utopia in practice. In writing about De Carlo's work, Tafuri describes the Rimini plan as an overtly utopian scheme.

It is therefore necessary to evaluate the utopian residue in the plan de Carlo drew up for Rimini, and the formal deviations present in his work, in light of the predominant theme informing them: the search for a security in design that contains the many demands of the clients, the search for a technique that is "open" and capable of conversing with languages other than its own.⁶⁴

Following his work in Urbino, De Carlo was approached by the Communist mayor of Rimini, Walter Ceccaroni, to elaborate the recently completed *Piano Regolatore Generale* (PRG, General Regulatory Plan) by Giuseppe Campos Venuti from 1965 by focussing solely on the historic centre. According to De Carlo's assistant on the scheme, the young architect Sandro Volta, the approach was made because of De Carlo's reputation as an innovator in regards to dealing with historic building fabric.⁶⁵ Upon accepting the commission, however, De Carlo declared his opposition to the 'specialisation' of dealing only with the historic centre and convinced Ceccaroni to expand the scope to include a focus on its relations and connections to the central business district and the surrounding working-class districts. The earlier plan by Campos Venuti, also an attempt at serious reform and redistribution, had focussed on issues of equity, public housing and urban management. It was nevertheless a plan with strict zoning between functions, and De Carlo's subsequent work can be seen as a critical alternative to this masterplan, in terms both of 'participation' and of urban planning as a form of expanded architecture that does not seek to reduce the complexity of the city: 'the city must live as an integrated set of all functions, as a single organism, even

⁶⁴ Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture*, 120. Tafuri traces the lineage of De Carlo's concept from his political interests in Anarchism, as well as his close contact with the advocacy planning movement in the USA.

⁶⁵ Sandro Volta, interview by Fabio Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 276. Sandro Volta had recently graduated from IUAV under De Carlo when he joined his office in June 1969.

if complex'.⁶⁶ De Carlo's scheme was an attempt to bridge the scales of architecture and urban planning. The Rimini scheme maintains the 'masterplan' form while being deeply critical of those aspects of planning with which it is generally associated, such as fixed functional zoning and the predetermination of future uses.⁶⁷ In a similar mode to his own celebrated PRG for Urbino, De Carlo elaborated his planning principles through the schematic design of exemplary architectural projects and principles.⁶⁸



Figure 3.7. De Carlo drawing on a blackboard during a meeting with students. Source: Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, front cover.

In line with De Carlo's conception of the realistic utopia not as a final form but as the first in a series of hypotheses, his plan for Rimini was intended to put in place the basic infrastructure by which the inhabitants of Rimini could determine their own urban plan. This approach was present not only in the process enacted but in the proposals themselves, such as changes in land tenure, public transportation

⁶⁶ 'la città deve vivere come un insieme integrato di tutte le funzioni, come un unico organismo, anche se complesso.' Volta, interview by Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 276. Translation by the author.

⁶⁷ In the way it primarily identifies a field for investigation, the plan can be connected to the 1963 Piano Intercomunale di Milano (PIM) through which Centis identifies De Carlo's utopian method: 'The plan was based on the form of a propeller. This was to be read not literally as a shape, but figuratively as a field for observation and intervention that was defined in such a way as to take advantage of urban energies that already existed' Ludovico Centis. "The Public of Architecture: Conflict and Consensus," *San Rocco* 12, (2016), 70.

⁶⁸ De Carlo's 1966 *Piano Regolatore Generale* for Urbino was widely influential as an approach to dealing with the historic city by introducing new functions and careful modulations of the existing fabric. The development of his ideas of utopia and feedback through that project were explored in Chapter 2.

and flexible housing types which would provide a framework for ongoing critical re-evaluation and change. From the outset, the design process was opened up to democratic contestation and participation. De Carlo developed the plan through a series of ‘town hall meetings’ at which the urban problems and conditions were discussed (Figure. 3.7), predominantly held in working-class *Case del popolo* (Community Centres). In reflecting on the project after its discontinuation, De Carlo emphasised the shift from the actual town hall to the places of ‘the people’.⁶⁹ Later, these same venues became the sites for discussion and critique of De Carlo’s concrete proposals, which were presented in a format that combined lecture-type presentations with the exhibition of ‘cards’ graphically detailing each proposal and its conceptual underpinnings (Figures 3.8, 3.10-3.11 below). The use of images in lectures, workshops and exhibitions was of crucial importance to opening up the discussion, and it appears that De Carlo and his team put great effort into their production. Suzanne Mulder, writing of the significance of the project within the discourse of Team 10, describes the material presented through the town hall meetings as ‘extremely clear, accessible graphic images of the city’s growth, the problems it faced and alternative proposals for solving them’.⁷⁰ Sandro Volta who, as De Carlo’s assistant, produced the ‘cards’ through which the information was presented, highlights the communicative quality of the material produced as the most genuine aspect of the participatory rhetoric De Carlo claimed for the project:

De Carlo was a great storyteller, he spoke very well, and even better he drew freehand live on stage. He believed (and invested a lot of time and personal energy) in the educational function and in the political effectiveness of communication, and therefore did not skimp on drawings, models, models, slides, small films, and a very fine oratory.⁷¹

⁶⁹ ‘La sede dell’Arengo, ormai democratica ma in passato dimora del potere, probabilmente sprigionava un effetto intimidatorio e incoraggiava quelli che erano stati sempre gabellati - non si sa mai - a non esporsi troppo. Perciò si decise di cambiare luogo di riunione e d’altra parte il cambiamento era richiesto anche dal fatto che il discorso si andava ormai facendo più specifico. Cosicché- ancora non c’erano i consigli di quartiere - siamo andati a discutere nelle Case del popolo della città, della periferia e della campagna. L’esperienza che stata ricavata da questi incontri è stata decisiva per la formulazione degli obiettivi del piano e per la loro trasformazione in proposte di organizzazione fisica spaziale’ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Progettazione e partecipazione- Il caso di Rimini,” in *L’architettura della partecipazione*, ed. Sara Marini, (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015), 95-96. Originally published in Giancarlo De Carlo, Carlo Doglio, Riccardo Mariani, and Alberto Samonà *Le radici malate dell’urbanistica italiana*, (Milan: Moizzi, 1976).

⁷⁰ Suzanne Mulder, “Rimini Urban Plan, 1970-1972” in *Team 10: 1953-81, in search of a Utopia of the present*, eds. Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel (Rotterdam: NAI, 2005), 194.

⁷¹ ‘De Carlo era un grande affabulatore, parlava benissimo, ed ancora meglio disegnava a mano libera in diretta sul palco. Credeva (ed investiva molto tempo ed energie personali) nella funzione educativa e nell’efficacia politica della comunicazione, e quindi non lesinava disegni, modelli, plastici, diapositive, filmi, ed una finissima oratoria.’ Volta, interview by Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 281.

Yet for Volta, who was closely involved in all stages of the project, there was a disconnect between the participatory rhetoric and the actual process of decision making:⁷²

from the beginning of my relationship with him De Carlo theorised participation, with a particular community inflection, as a good anarchist: "it is the people who must decide". Unfortunately, however, he had a very strong-willed and in fact authoritarian character and behaviour. He would decide: point-and-stop, and therefore enacted one-way participation: he spoke very well and with a wealth of details and information about what he thought and proposed and the others had to assent, with little real chance of making him change his mind.⁷³

These passages describe a process similar in some ways to that enacted in Matteotti. Through both image and oratory, De Carlo sought to educate and persuade rather than take on significant changes from the people. Here, again, true iteration is crucially absent from De Carlo's enactment of the realistic utopia in his projects of participation.

Beyond the apparent inconsistencies in the application of critical images in the process of participation, the project can nevertheless be seen as an attempt by De Carlo to provide a fundamental critique of the role of established powers in the shaping of cities by providing images of an alternative urban organisation. Sara Marini, in her introduction to the volume in which De Carlo's reflection on Rimini was republished, highlights his critique of power. She counts his critique of the position of the Malatesta Temple as the most significant, as it explores the way power shapes the city to its own purposes.⁷⁴ In this account, originally given as a lecture addressing the "Sick roots of Italian urbanism", De Carlo devotes relatively little time to discussing the process of participation and provides no detail of his proposals. Rather, his focus is on using Rimini as a case study of the implicit processes of exploitation embedded in city form and the delineations of power which can be read through it:

⁷² While Volta provides an important account as one who was intimately involved with De Carlo's process, it is important to note that when eventually De Carlo's plan was annulled it was Volta who was commissioned by the municipality to draft its replacement.

⁷³ 'De Carlo ha teorizzato fin dall'inizio del mio rapporto con lui la partecipazione, con una particolare inflessione comunitaria, da buon anarchico: "è la gente che deve decidere." Purtroppo però lui aveva un carattere ed un comportamento molto volitivo e di fatto autoritario, decideva lui punto e basta, e quindi interpretava la partecipazione a senso unico: lui raccontava benissimo e con dovizia di particolari ed informazioni ciò che pensava e proponeva e gli altri dovevano assentire, con scarsa possibilità effettiva di fargli cambiare idea.' Volta, interview by Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 278.

⁷⁴ Marini, "Scegliere la parte," 27-28.

Each city carries in its organizational system and in its formal configurations the precise record of how in each period of its existence the physical space was distributed. It is clear, for those who can read in the stratifications of the urban context, "who", "when" and "how" he exploited; and on the other hand "who" and to "what extent" has been exploited, in the territory and across the territory. The signs are always precise and unambiguous, much more than what happens in written stories. In Rimini the urban planning events are particularly exemplary.⁷⁵

This speech was delivered after the plan had been revoked by the Rimini Municipality. As such, it can be read as a search for the cause of this failure. In this regard, the background of continual exploitation provides an ideal substrate for De Carlo's explanation of the plan's failure without the need to examine his own processes. The speech also makes clear De Carlo's attitude towards the existing form of the city of Rimini, which stands in stark contrast to his work in Urbino. In Urbino, the task was to resuscitate the 'Utopia' of the existing architectural forms by allowing them new life. In Rimini, the existing form was in general a residue of past processes of exploitation and property speculation. As such, while the urban surgery in Urbino was subtle, in Rimini a much more radical operation was proposed. At the heart of his proposal was a confrontation with the system of individualised property subdivision, which De Carlo sought to replace with a system of terraced houses.⁷⁶ This appears to have been aimed less at a redistribution of property and more at generating an urban densification and multiplication of use.

⁷⁵ 'Ciascuna città porta nel suo sistema organizzativo e nelle sue configurazioni formali la registrazione precisa di come in ogni periodo della sua esistenza è stato distribuito lo spazio fisico. È chiaro, per chi sa leggere nelle stratificazioni del contesto urbano, «chi», «quando» e «come» abbia sfruttato; e d'altra parte «chi» e in «quale misura» sia stato sfruttato, nel territorio e attraverso il territorio. I segni sono sempre precisi e inequivocabili, assai più di quanto non accada nelle storie scritte. A Rimini le vicende urbanistiche sono particolarmente esemplari.' De Carlo, "Progettazione e partecipazione," 84.

⁷⁶ 'De Carlo si poneva il problema della città nel suo complesso: considerava Rimini una città brutta, molto estesa ma poco densa (allora ancor meno di oggi), costruita da case di due tre piani prive di effetto città, frutto di banali frazionamenti catastali, senza luoghi minimamente di attrazione, come piazze o anche semplici giardini. La proposta era che l'effetto città bisognava realizzarlo nella grande area del Nuovo Centro (storico, direzionale ed area intermedia) dove perseguire la "densificazione della residenza privata" con le case a schiera.' Volta, interview by Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 278.

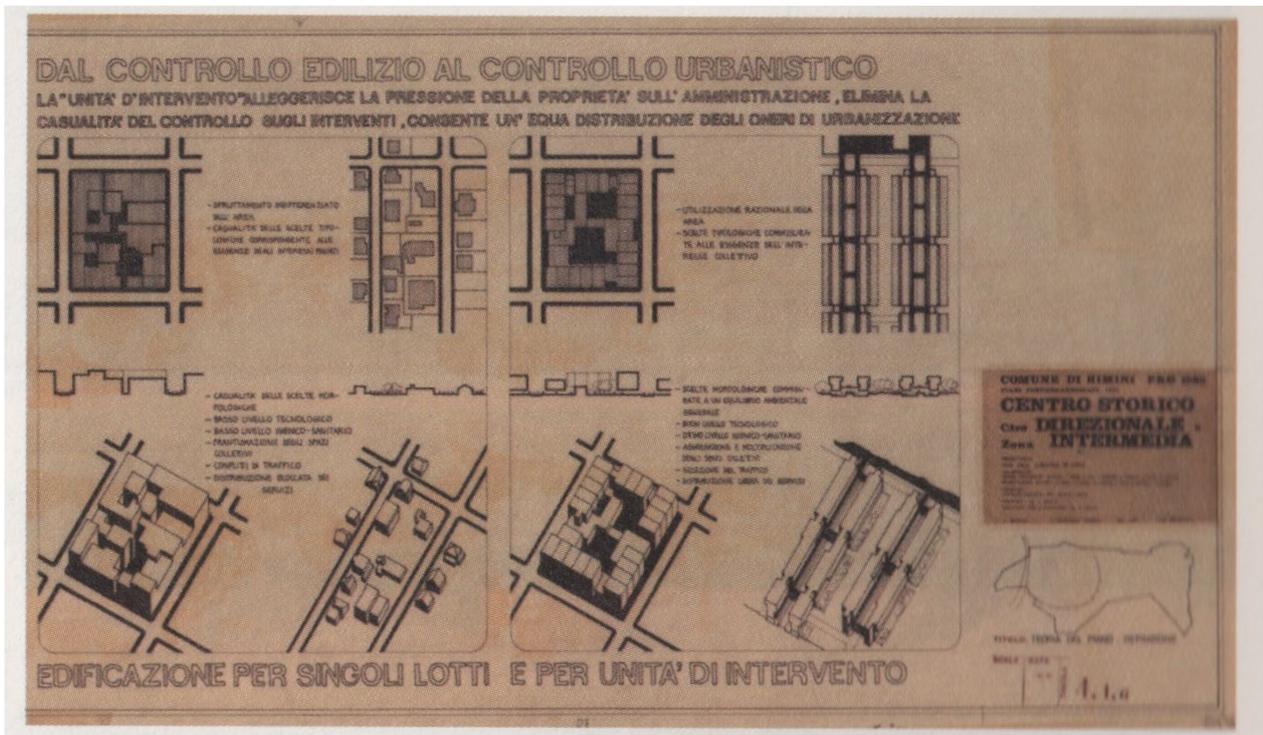


Figure 3.8. The card displaying the proposal for new densification controls. Source: Samassa, *Giancarlo De Carlo, Inventario Analitico dell'Archivio*, 125.

This 'densification of the private residence' became the core strategy of the new development controls, framed by De Carlo as a shift 'from building control to urban control' (Figure 3.8). In this schema, property divisions were dissolved to allow for entire city blocks to be considered as whole 'units of intervention' (Figure 3.9). According to the drawings, 'the intervention unit lightens the pressure of the property on the administration, eliminates the randomness of control over the interventions, allows an equitable distribution of the urbanisation costs'.⁷⁷ As discussed will be, this proposal would prove contentious.

⁷⁷ Taken from the drawing shown in Figure 3.8.

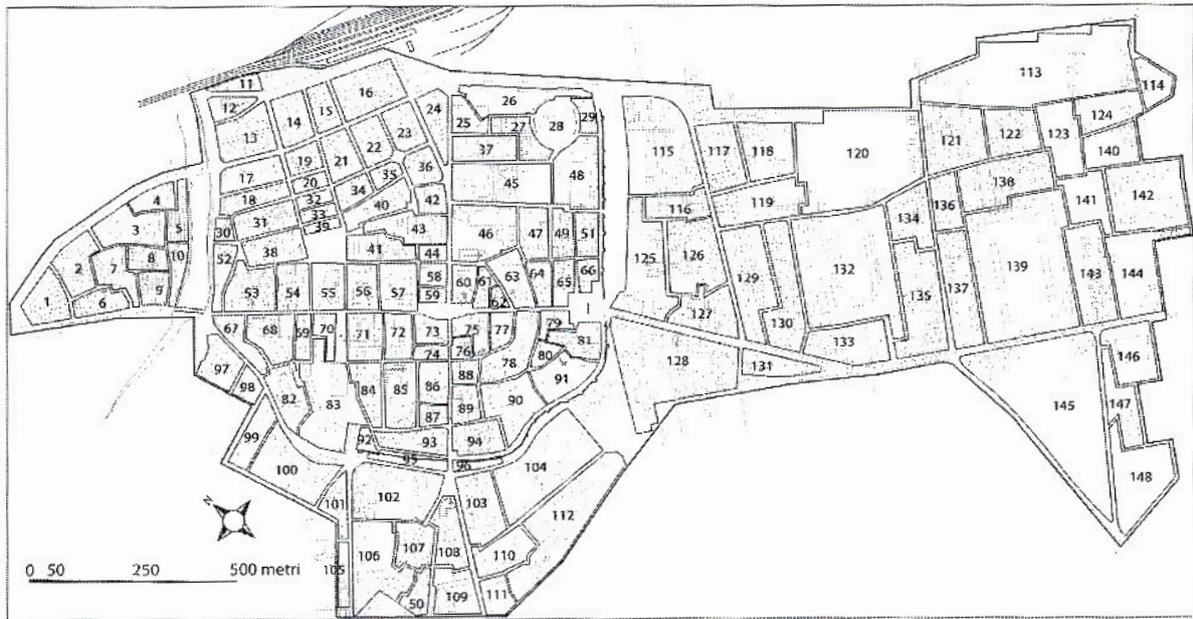


Figure 3.9. The 148 ‘units of intervention’. Source: Fabio Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 35.

De Carlo’s plan for the new centre proceeded in a somewhat similar form as the PRG for Urbino, that is to say it combined more traditional and regulatory proposals with specific architectural interventions as examples. These ‘proposals’ come closest to De Carlo’s notion of the realistic utopia as providing a design hypothesis in the form of an architectural image. The proposals were themselves intended primarily as instigators of a process whereby the inhabitants of Rimini could observe, discuss and create their own city. The grid features prominently as a matrix for laying out the new interventions, the intention being to provide a framework for the future development without overtly restricting its form or use.⁷⁸ At existing centres of activity, the plan proposed the construction of urban ‘condensers’, which clustered new services and new activities (Figure 3.10). These condensers would also serve as places of encounter and sites of ‘new education’ at significant points of connection.

⁷⁸ Mirko Zardini, “Crestomazia decarliana,” *Lotus International* 86 (1995): 116.



Figure 3.11. The card displaying the proposal for a minirail. Source: Samassa, *Giancarlo De Carlo, Inventario Analitico dell'Archivio*, 125.

In De Carlo's approach to participation at Rimini, the 'image' represented by each proposal was intended to critique the current sprawling, disconnected city of real-estate speculation by proposing a dense, multi-layered city of collective occupation. This bears a strong relationship to his formulation of the realistic utopia, where counter-images both highlight contradictions and frame their replacement. This is borne out in the account of Volta, who describes De Carlo's proposals for the minirail and the condensers as progressive 'images' of what the city could be.⁸¹

De Carlo's proposals for urban restructuring became quite detailed in the case of the dilapidated but vibrant working-class neighbourhood of Borgo San Giuliano. There, the modular grid as a mechanism for flexible growth over time, which framed the overall plan of Rimini, was deployed at a smaller scale as a kind self-build housing scheme. The proposed row-houses, defined by strong party walls, were intended to be developed incrementally over time by the inhabitants themselves.⁸² While the project enabled De

⁸¹ 'Ceccaroni and Pagliarani also believed that this city as it came out of reconstruction was not going well and that it should be improved, but they did not know how to express a new image. The Campos Venuti PRG of 1965 had certainly had many merits: it had fought the land rent, lowered the indexes and provided for areas for traffic, standards and city parks and much more, but it was not a design plan. It was necessary to propose and show people a new and different image of Rimini and in this De Carlo was the right person'

(anche Ceccaroni e Pagliarani credevano che questa città così com'era uscita dalla ricostruzione non andava bene e che dovesse essere migliorata, ma non sapevano come esprimere una nuova immagine. Il PRG del 1965 di Campos Venuti aveva avuto certo molti meriti: aveva combattuto la rendita fondiaria, abbassato gli indici e previsto le aree per la viabilità, gli standards ed i parchi cittadini e tanto altro, ma non era un piano progettuale. Occorreva proporre e far vedere alla gente una nuova e diversa immagine di Rimini ed in questo De Carlo era la persona giusta) Volta, interview by Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 278.

⁸² Volta, interview by Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 280.

Carlo to experiment with notions of self-build, the wholesale demolition of existing neighbourhoods to enable this ‘natural’ process seems to contradict his own logic. McKean describes a ‘painstaking house-by-house’ survey, yet this is hard to discern in the final plans, for which the identical modules are overlaid on the former houses with minimal acknowledgement of the former street grid (Figure 3.12).⁸³

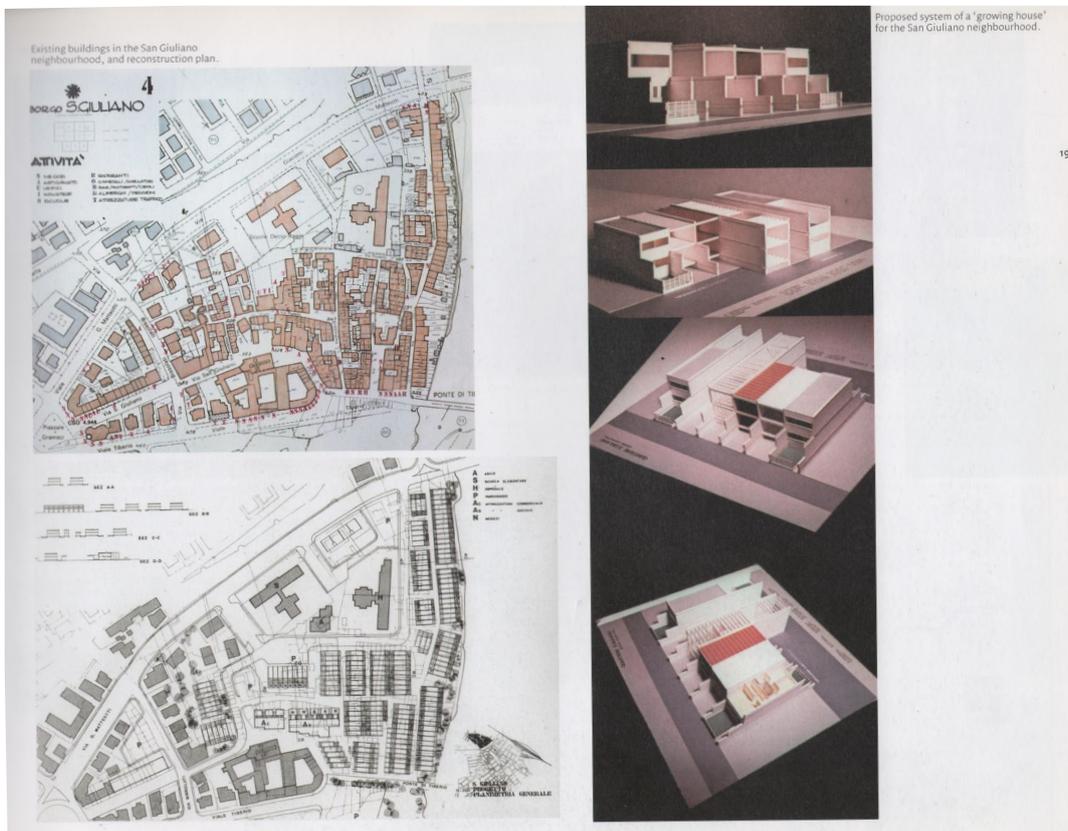


Figure 3.12. The reconstruction of Borgo San Giuliano. Source: Suzanne Mulder, ‘Rimini Urban Plan, 1970-1972’, 197.

The critical reception and eventual repeal of the plan highlights significant difficulties in attempting to apply the realistic utopia. The Rimini plan was never realised and so remains speculative. In their accounts of this failure, De Carlo and his biographer McKean both lay the blame at the feet of the city’s Communist administration, who balked at its ‘anarchism’; in particular, ‘[t]he idea that people could build for themselves was considered dangerous and foolish’.⁸⁴ For Fabio Tomasetti, the author of the most complete account of the project and its reaction, the plan fell victim to public participation, rejected not only by the government but also by the very population with whom De Carlo had sought to engage: ‘De Carlo evoked the participation of the population and the citizens, participating as required by law with their observations, demolished the Plan’.⁸⁵ In May 1972, when the plan was put up for public comment,

⁸³ McKean, *Layered Places*, 116.

⁸⁴ De Carlo quoted in McKean, *Layered Places*, 116.

⁸⁵ ‘De Carlo ha evocato la partecipazione della popolazione e i cittadini partecipando come previsto dalla legge con le osservazioni hanno demolito il Piano.’ Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 281.

the local newspapers rallied opposition to it and large assemblies were held to say ‘no to the illegitimate and collectivist plan’.⁸⁶ The municipality received over 2400 submissions against the plan. For Sandro Volta, the primary reason for the rejection was a clash with the interests of private property owners. For De Carlo’s plan to succeed, it required large numbers of properties to be expropriated, in order to ‘equalise the urban burden’. This ‘sparked the vehement protests of citizens who own an “individual” house just built, still to be paid, or with the license in hand and the debts for the lot.’⁸⁷ He uses San Giuliano as an example of how the ideals of De Carlo’s plan, initially applauded in the abstract, fell apart when confronted with the realities of land ownership:

The beauty of the idea is undeniable, but applied to a context of mini-properties such as the existing one it was a disaster. I remember very well that when in the first assemblies in San Giuliano he proclaimed that everyone must have a house tailored to their needs, he was covered with applause like a star, but when the project was presented in 1971, all hell broke loose.⁸⁸

Following the public outcry, the administration, now under Mayor Pagliarani, initially supported De Carlo and adopted the plan: ‘But when the situation became difficult and beyond the local pressures came criticisms of the Plan from the regional and national levels of the party, the Plan was abandoned in 1975.’⁸⁹

The project illustrates some of the difficulties of enacting the realistic utopia. In large part these can be understood as problems of De Carlo’s own making. It is perhaps not surprising that a process in which the ‘participation’ of the public was mostly limited to attending De Carlo’s lectures should, in the end, be abandoned. Again, the lack of a process in which ideas could genuinely iterate, a central mechanism described in the realistic utopia, plays a key role. McKean describes the fundamental misinterpretation of the proposed process whereby design could proceed through an iterative, tentative and reticulating series of hypotheses: ‘each of De Carlo’s ideas, proposed as the opening of a dialogue, was treated as a conclusion. Thus, instead of a dialectic being generated, each suggestion was simply criticised as an inadequate *solution*’.⁹⁰ McKean blames the lack of iteration on De Carlo’s partners in the dialogue, although the limits set by De Carlo on what could be iterated must have played a role in the lack of continued ‘dialogue’.

⁸⁶ Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 215.

⁸⁷ ‘scatenarono le veementi proteste di cittadini proprietari di una casa “individuale” appena realizzata, ancora da pagare, o con la licenza in mano e i debiti per il lotto’ Volta, interview by Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 278.

⁸⁸ ‘Innegabile la bellezza dell’idea, ma applicata ad un contesto di miniproprietà come quello esistente fu una sciagura. Ricordo benissimo che quando nelle prime assemblee a San Giuliano proclamava che tutti devono avere una casa fatta sulle proprie esigenze era coperto di applausi come un divo, ma quando nel ’71 si andò a presentare il progetto scoppio il finimondo.’ Volta, interview by Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 280.

⁸⁹ Volta, interview by Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 280.

⁹⁰ McKean, *Layered Places*, 116.

In *An Architecture of Participation*, De Carlo states that the efficacy of a project does not lie in its realisation, particularly if that realisation depends on its adoption by ‘the institutions’. As with Matteotti, here perhaps De Carlo would have hoped for the ‘image’ of his plan to have effects beyond the architecture itself. This hope is evident in an excerpt from a letter written by De Carlo to Mayor Pagliarani in 1975.

Dear Pagliarani,

I have learned indirectly that my Plan has been repealed.

I am sorry for me, for you and for Rimini; but on the other hand, I am sure that its image will remain in the thoughts of the Riminese people for a long time to come.⁹¹

In this letter, De Carlo expresses his faith in the plan as a realistic utopia in which ‘an architectural image can have important effects even if does not succeed in becoming a reality’.⁹² It does not seem from the evidence that his plans for Rimini had the kind of effects that he had anticipated. The images he proposed in Rimini set off a process of critique and reaction, but the target became not the ‘stupidity and injustices’ of the broader urban and societal situation but the assumptions of the architect and the plan itself. In De Carlo’s texts, ‘the people’ and ‘the system’ are positioned as two competing sides between which the architect must choose. The reality shown by the case of Rimini is that ‘the people’ are deeply enmeshed in ‘the system’ and, accordingly, share many of the same interests.

The Realistic Utopia, Interrupted.

In developing a comprehensive understanding of the realistic utopia as a means to establish and maintain critical relations to the systems and structure which frame the interventions of participatory architecture, this chapter has explored how these ideas met the realities of the large-scale housing and urban projects to which De Carlo was directing his theories. Both Matteotti and Rimini can be seen as failures in terms of their implementation, Matteotti being realised only partially while Rimini remained a purely paper exercise. Beyond this they can also be read as failures to enact the principles set out in “Il pubblico” and *An Architecture of Participation*. In both projects, the process of participation enacted by De Carlo was much more limited than what he described in his texts. In Rimini, Sandro Volta describes the ‘one way participation’ that characterised De Carlo’s many meetings, where the aim was more to convince than to leave the ideas open to change. Similarly, in Matteotti, Sergio Bracco found it hard to locate the line

⁹¹ ‘Caro Pagliarani, ho saputo indirettamente che il mio Piano è stato abrogato. Mi dispiace per me, per voi e per Rimini; ma d'altra parte, sono sicuro che la sua immagine rimarrà nel pensiero dei riminesi a lungo.’ “Lettera di Giancarlo De Carlo al Sindaco di Rimini 12 maggio 1975” in Tomasetti, *Cambiare Rimini*, 5.

⁹² De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 26.

between participation and ‘subtle persuasion’ and notes the—perhaps not coincidental— resonance of the fruits of participation with the architect’s pre-existing formal moves.⁹³

These critiques do not take into account De Carlo’s position that participation was never a matter of transcribing user demands but, rather, an exercise in establishing a mutual critical dialogue. Yet the projects also reveal clear challenges to De Carlo’s conception of a critical practice for participation and the operability of the realistic utopia within it. As is clear from the case of Matteotti, problems arise as to the viability of a practice which explicitly sets itself against those who fund it. The Rimini plan, on the other hand, reveals the complexity of situations in which the interests of ‘the people’ are bound up with those of the wider system of private property.

By locating the abstract ideas of the realistic utopia within these real projects, the chapter has provided sites for close examination of particular components of the broader notion, in particular the use of architectural images in the process. Across both projects, the images used in meetings, exhibitions and presentations begin to approximate the role of the ‘counter-image’ proposed by De Carlo in his theoretical work. While it is clear that these images were used effectively to propose critical alternatives to established models, there is less evidence of their iteration through exposure to critique by the participants or subsequent revisions by the architect himself.

As described by De Carlo, the ‘architecture of participation’ is itself a utopia, a horizon to strive for. From this perspective, a different assessment of the projects’ achievements emerges. De Carlo believed that the architecture of participation was itself a ‘counter-image’, a depiction of an alternative relational structure through which the environment could be produced. For De Carlo it was part of a lineage of ‘images’ constructed by Geddes, Morris, Kropotkin and Considerant, none of whom were able to enact their visions totally or unequivocally. For De Carlo, the counter-image:

can have important effects even if does not succeed in becoming a reality.... It can explode the most deeply rooted commonplaces, expose the stupidity or injustice of situations which are passively accepted, awaken the consciousness of rights which no had dared to demand, outline a goal hitherto unknown which, henceforth becomes a conscious aim.⁹⁴

A connection can be drawn between the operations of the image within the architecture of participation and the image of the architecture of participation itself. In Tafuri’s assessment, ‘De Carlo was also capable of turning the mythology of participation into a flexible instrument of experimentation’. Tafuri here

⁹³ Bracco, “Un banco di prova,” 14.

⁹⁴ De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 26.

displays some skepticism towards the notion of participation (a mythology) but credits De Carlo with an ability to transcend it.⁹⁵ The projects of Matteotti and Rimini revealed the inconsistencies within the image of participation cultivated by De Carlo. This can in large part be attributed to the fundamental absence of opportunities for feedback and iteration of critique and proposition, a central characteristic of the process described by De Carlo as the realistic utopia. It is, however, important to view these projects as what they were: initial experiments in applying his ideas. As such, they should not be judged solely as failed applications of a pure formula. In fact, De Carlo's description of the realistic utopia offers a way to see the projects, with all their manifold successes and failures, as themselves part of a much larger process of developing a true architecture of participation. The iterative feedback system of images as 'hypotheses' within participation is the same process by which the image of participation itself can 'have important effects' beyond immediate implementation. If, then, we consider these attempts as only the initial 'tentative hypotheses' of participation, we move beyond discussions of success as singular instances to consider how these experiments led to further, more refined iterations.

Understanding Matteotti and Rimini in these terms could lead us to expect the remaining three decades of De Carlo's career to continue to develop the realistic utopia of participatory practice through an incremental, iterative process of development. Instead, De Carlo reformulated his conception to focus on 'indirect participation' and moved away from discussions of transformative images and the realistic utopia.⁹⁶ This move can be understood as a reaction to the results of Rimini and Matteotti, but it should also be understood in relation to the broader changes within the discipline regarding architecture's social role. These transformations in De Carlo's theory through the 1970s following Matteotti and Rimini are the subject of the next chapter.

⁹⁵ Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture*, 121.

⁹⁶ Speaking of De Carlo's work beyond the 1970s: 'In the same years "tentative design" ousted "process design" in De Carlo's personal lexis.' Francesco Samassa, "A building is not a building is not a building" *Giancarlo De Carlo Percorsi*, 348.

4. Participation and the Speculative Image in De Carlo's Theory 1976-1980

In 1980 the Yale architecture journal *Perspecta* published an abridged version of “An Architecture of Participation” in which all reference to the realistic utopia had been omitted.¹ This chapter argues that this disappearance can be read as only one endpoint of De Carlo's theoretical moves in the years immediately following the termination of his attempts to enact his theories of participation in Terni and Rimini, as discussed in Chapter 3.² While these experiments could be regarded as the first iteration of the realistic utopia of participation and, as such, open to further development, De Carlo appears instead to withdraw from the notion. Both McKean and Zucchi highlight this point in their analyses of the shift between the ‘direct’ participation at Matteotti and the ‘indirect’ modes of ‘reading’ places used for the 1979 housing project for Mazzorbo.³ Over this period, I propose, De Carlo's formulation of a practice critical of the structures that commission and control it, the realistic utopia, underwent a parallel transformation. Although in certain respects this transformation can be seen as a withdrawal, I argue that developments in De Carlo's theories also made his ideas about a critical practice of participation more generalised and mobile, thereby making them available as conceptual tools for use in other places and practices.

Previous chapters have explored the development of De Carlo's conceptions of participation and the realistic utopia up to their formulation in the texts ‘Il pubblico dell'architettura’ and *An Architecture of Participation*, and how he attempted to enact them in his housing and urban projects of the early 1970s.⁴ This chapter describes how these notions developed over the ensuing decade. This period presented key

¹ Giancarlo De Carlo, “An Architecture of Participation,” *Perspecta* 17 (1980): 74-79. For the most part the republication is identical to the original, however several passages have been removed. The omissions include elements specific to the context (such as engagement with the earlier speakers) and a rather laboured account of the Modern movement's shortcomings. Strikingly the other major omission, starting from the very first paragraph in which it is mentioned, is the entire section dealing with the notion of the realistic Utopia. In the original version, the ‘realistic Utopia’ is the first and, presumably, most important aspect of the ‘architecture of participation’. In the *Perspecta* version, there is no trace of it. While this may not be conclusive evidence that De Carlo had rejected this idea outright, it would appear that he no longer saw it as worthy of inclusion.

² The *Nuovo Villaggio Matteotti* housing scheme in Terni and the *Piano Del Nuovo Centro* for Rimini. These projects are extensively examined for their relevance to De Carlo's critical conception of participation in Chapter 3.

³ Here De Carlo could only retreat. [The experience at Rimini] and the Terni experience led him to rethink how he might operate in the very different situation where there was not such a coherent community with which to work, and this led to his notion of “indirect participation.” Now De Carlo's experience of participation increasingly involved reading meaning not so much in the people as in the stones.’ John McKean, *Giancarlo De Carlo: Layered Places* (Stuttgart: Axel Menges, 2004), 116-117. Zucchi uses De Carlo's project for Mazzorbo to exemplify this approach of indirect participation, which involved a technique related to De Carlo's emerging interest in architecture as a means of communication. In this way, the deep study and ‘reading’ of the forms of the existing houses and settlement became, for De Carlo, a legitimate way to allow the people of the place to participate in its design. Benedict Zucchi, *Giancarlo De Carlo*, (Oxford: Butterworth, 1992), 125.

⁴ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Il pubblico dell'architettura,” *Parametro* 5, (1970): 4-12,98; Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1972).

challenges to De Carlo's construct of the realistic utopia. His experiments in practice had raised questions about the efficacy of participation and the possibility of taking a critical position towards systems in which the relationships between 'power' and 'the people' were complex. In Rimini and Matteotti, the comprehensive schema imagined for participation and the critical utility of form and image as the realistic utopia were implemented only in fragmentary ways, due both to external factors that prevented a genuine iterative process and to contradictions within De Carlo's own process. The results of these projects would now be set against a political context in which the ideas of radically restructuring society implicit in De Carlo's approach were being questioned and gentler forms of economic liberty were gaining ascendancy. As Tahl Kaminer has argued, these broader societal shifts were reflected in architecture's withdrawal into practices of speculative image making.⁵ For De Carlo, this background presented a complex challenge for the notions of speculative image making and propositional critique that I have argued were intrinsic to his description of the realistic utopia. In this chapter his transformation of these notions against these challenges are tracked via a close reading of three of De Carlo's theoretical contributions. Each of the texts considered here highlights a distinct aspect of the transformation, the first as an extension of earlier work, the second through contestation, and the third as a distinct reformulation.

First is his 1976 article, "Altri appunti sulla partecipazione" (Other Notes on Participation) in *Parametro*, the same journal which had published "Il pubblico" six years earlier.⁶ As implied by the title, this work represents an extension to his earlier works on participation. It provides the best account of how the Terni and Rimini experiences had shifted his notion of participation. He develops his earlier formulation of participation as running throughout the entire process of building by paying close attention to the realities of building procurement and the frictions that result when they are challenged by processes of participation. A key development is his argument that changing the process itself is the central task of participation and, accordingly, the generation and manipulation of processes themselves becomes the conscious aim of architecture. The image of the realistic utopia persists in descriptions of participation as a 'limit situation' and in the key role of the architect as the provider of images that act both as critiques of the current situation and proposals for alternative configurations of reality.

⁵ Tahl Kaminer, *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation: The Reproduction of Post-Fordism in Late-Twentieth-Century Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁶ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Altri appunti sulla partecipazione (Con riferimento a un settore dell'architettura dove sembrerebbe piu'ovvia)," *Parametro* 52 (1976): 50-53.

Second, De Carlo's voice appears amongst those of other participants in the transcript of a debate accompanying the exhibition 'America: Europa,' held during the 1976 Venice Biennale.⁷ De Carlo's contribution, coming mid-way through the debate, catalyses the ensuing discussion around widely differing attitudes towards the formal and social imperatives of architecture. The transcript provides insight into a moment in which De Carlo's conceptions of both participation and speculative practice within architecture are placed in direct contest with other ideas and conceptions of architecture that were gaining prominence at the time, including those expressed by Denise Scott Brown, Aldo Rossi, Peter Eisenman, Raimund Abraham and Manfredo Tafuri. Hard distinctions appear between architecture's social mission and the possibilities of experimentation via speculative image making, two aspects which De Carlo had previously combined in the realistic utopia. In this highly polarised context, I highlight the contributions of Álvaro Siza and Oswald Matthias Ungers who, each in his own way, championed a practice of architecture capable of holding together the participatory and the speculative.

Third is the inaugural Thomas Cubitt Lecture, 'Reflections on the Present State of Architecture', delivered in London in 1978.⁸ In this lecture, De Carlo shifts the notion of participation into a more general and holistic approach to architecture and explicitly rejects architecture as a speculative drawing exercise. He also draws out a new conception of architecture as an 'underlying matrix' that is explicitly concerned with disentangling architecture from the needs of power and which emerges at different times in different ways. Understood in these terms, his earlier conception of the realistic utopia should not be considered 'dead', despite the fact that the originator appeared to have moved away from its explicit use.

My analysis of these three texts shows how De Carlo's notion of the realistic utopia as a conceptual tool for establishing critical relationships within an architecture of participation was challenged and how he navigated these challenges. I argue that a mobile notion of architecture's radical essence can be drawn from De Carlo's own theorisations to augment the understanding of the realistic utopia presented previously. This idea confounds the easy narrative that De Carlo's ideas were made redundant by the changing context of the 1970s and proposes instead that they can take on new forms in times, places and practices other than his own.

⁷ Franco Raggi, ed., "Quale movimento moderno" in *Europa-America: architetture urbane, alternative suburban*, (Venezia: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978), 174-182. My analysis is based on consultation with an original copy of the transcript by Vincenzo-Guiseppa Berti, "Europa-America" (Venezia, 1 Agosto 1976) in which the English language contributions were left untranslated: Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale. Reference number: ARCH153618. Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies fonds, 1965-1984, Series: Publications, 1966-1984, Sub-series: Periodicals, 1970-1982, The Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

⁸ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Reflections on the Present State of Architecture," *The Inaugural Thomas Cubitt Lecture by Professor Giancarlo de Carlo at The Royal Institution, London W1. Monday 22 May 1978*. (London: Thomas Cubitt Trust, 1978). The lecture was also published as Giancarlo De Carlo, "Reflections on the Present State of Architecture," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 10, no.2 (1978): 28-40.

Other Notes on Participation. *Parametro* 1976

In 1976, De Carlo wrote a new article on participation for the journal *Parametro*, titled “Altri Appunti Sulla Partecipazione (Con riferimento a un settore dell’architettura dove sembrerebbe piu’ovvia)” (Other notes on participation [with reference to a sector of architecture where it would seem most obvious]). The article bears the mark of his recent experiences in the projects at Terni and Rimini, both of which had by then been prematurely terminated.⁹ In many ways, this text reads as a defence of his earlier ideas in the face of challenges encountered in practice. It provides both an indirect reflection on those projects as well as a subtle reworking of his earlier concepts in response to the ‘realities’ which faced those projects.

“Il pubblico” and *An Architecture of Participation* both begin with a critique of the modern movement and authoritarian tendencies in design to project participation as a hopeful new prospect of renewal. “Altri appunti” begins with De Carlo critiquing the concept of participation itself. He pulls apart the history of the term participation, finding it riddled with ‘the most varied meanings and the most suspicious intentions’.¹⁰ The text, however, is firmly aimed at salvaging the concept from its ambiguities and misuse. As such, rather than rejecting the term ‘participation’, he chooses to retain it and define it more strongly as ‘a process that has the aim of giving everyone equal decision-making power. Or: as a series of continuous and interdependent actions that tend to a situation in which everyone shares power in equal measure’.¹¹ This sense of reclaiming participation from misrepresentation runs through the article.

⁹ De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 50-53.

¹⁰ ‘La denominazione di “partecipazione” copre oggi i più svariati significati e le più sospette intenzioni.’ De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 50.

¹¹ ‘un processo che ha il fine di attribuire a tutti eguale potere di decisione. Oppure: come una serie di azioni continue e interdipendenti che tendono a una situazione in cui ciascuno condivide il potere In eguale misura.’ De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 50.

The sector of architecture in which participation ‘would seem obvious’ is that of subsidised housing, an area which De Carlo identifies as particularly lacking in provision for participation. While the subject of housing is in the background of his formulations for participation in both ‘Il Pubblico’ and *An Architecture of Participation*, here it is examined in much finer detail, running through each step of the process. He attributes the lack of participation in the housing sector to two main factors: the ‘philanthropic pretext’ that such housing is a gift and should remain unquestioned by those who receive it, so that ‘it would be strange for the beneficiaries to make claims or even express opinions on the benefits bestowed upon them’; and the ‘qualitative pretext’ that efficiency in the use of collective resources must take precedence over any individual taste or preference. While De Carlo speaks of the production of housing in the abstract, without referring to any specific examples, the text can be read as a reflection on his own attempt in Matteotti to incorporate participation into a large-scale housing project and the difficulties he encountered there.

This reflection on the ‘realities’ of his previous project is presented in a step-by-step description of the procedures of typical housing production. De Carlo uses this account to highlight the extent to which the normative technical and procurement mechanisms of housing production prevent any possibility of participation. He traces the mechanisms of this obstruction across all stages of procurement—from allocation of funding, through selection of land, to development of the master plan. The budget is decided through obscure bureaucratic assessments ‘under the pressure of reasons of political expediency that have nothing to do with real needs’.¹² The locations are decided ‘always with the concern of being able to acquire them at low cost and therefore identifying them among those of greatest environmental squalor and lowest level of infrastructures’.¹³ In his account, the technical procedures of masterplanning, setting specifications, building typologies and envelopes all rely on quasi-mystical calculations ‘defining enclosures and then stuffing lodgings into them’.¹⁴ Here he makes clear his frustration with a basic condition of the architectural process, namely that, once a decision is taken, it cannot be revisited. This is emphasised in relation to the detailed design of the buildings themselves, which are

¹² ‘sotto la pressione di motivi di opportunità politica che non hanno nulla a che fare con le reali esigenze’. De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 52.

¹³ ‘sempre con la preoccupazione di poterle acquisire a basso costo e quindi identificandole tra quelle di maggiore squalore ambientale e di più basso livello di infrastrutturazione’. De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 52.

¹⁴ ‘definendo involucri. e poi ficcandoci gli alloggi dentro’. De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 52.

frozen in relation to the need for immobility of the standard tender specifications. The latter take on such a decisive weight as to condition all aspects of the "design". In fact, no variant can be proposed, much less lightly accepted, if it involves remakes of the "Specifications in print" and therefore disturbances of the bureaucratic body that drafted them.¹⁵

This quotation reveals the clash between the ideals of the realistic utopia and the realities of building procurement. Perhaps unsurprisingly, De Carlo had found that building contractors were not ready to accept previously drafted specifications as mere 'hypotheses', open to continual revision and refinement. As I explained in Chapter 3, De Carlo's process of participation at Matteotti was much less open than that described in his rhetoric. Similarly, here, he does not open his conception to revision by expanding his notion of participation to embrace the pragmatic needs of the builders. As such, he maintains a rigidity in his own formulation while criticising the rigidity of the construction process. De Carlo's experience in Matteotti, where he was actively excluded from the building site, is apparent in the disdain with which he describes the moment of construction, when participation should be most intense, as instead being undertaken with 'the most absolute secrecy'.¹⁶ As for the building processes themselves, again it is the inability to revise and to adapt which is identified as most problematic: 'standardisation makes it impossible to quickly replace the solutions adopted when they prove to be inefficient'.¹⁷ What is absent are the qualities that he would see as enabling his conception of participation to extend into the realm of use. The identification of the actual inhabitants is postponed until participation is no longer possible, and they are left with 'nothing else to do but adapt to the "type" given them'.¹⁸ Issues such as management and maintenance of the buildings are assigned to other sectors, and considerations of how the building may in future be adapted or repurposed are deemed impossible.

De Carlo concludes that, in order to allow participation, it is necessary not merely to shift the conceptual basis of housing provision but also to transform each 'instrumental apparatus' of the process. In providing examples of where and how this should occur, he emphasises the need to return to the process all the questions and complexities that are excluded. This insertion of complexity, of critique, brings us back to the realistic utopia. While he does not use the term, the core concept is reiterated and expanded,

¹⁵ 'congelato in rapporto alle esigenze di immobilità dei Capitolati di Appalto-tipo. Questi ultimi assumono un peso così determinante da condizionare tutti gli aspetti del "disegno." Infatti nessuna variante può essere proposta, e tanto meno accolta, con leggerezza, se implica rifacimenti dei "Capitolati a stampa" e quindi turbamenti del corpo burocratico che li ha redatti.' De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 52.

¹⁶ 'E qui il mistero si fa più profondo perché si dà per scontato che i grossi interessi che corrono impongono la più assoluta segretezza.' De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 52.

¹⁷ 'Quanto ai processi tecnologici, la tendenza è di irrigidirli e unificarli, in omaggio al principio che è la quantità che comanda; mentre di fatto accade che la rigidità produce sprechi e aumento dei costi e l'unificazione rende impossibile di sostituire rapidamente le soluzioni adottate quando si rivelano inefficienti.' De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 52.

¹⁸ 'Quando l'edificio è terminato, gli alloggi vengono finalmente assegnati ai destinatari che li vedono per la prima volta e non hanno ormai altro da fare se non adattarsi al "tipo" che gli ha dato la sorte.' De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 52.

albeit with a different emphasis. As in *An Architecture of Participation*, the term utopia is first raised as a rhetorical objection to participation, which becomes the springboard for the discussion of adding reality to utopia. Here, however, it is used to highlight the essentially unattainable status of true participation:

At this point, one might wonder whether the projections of the architecture of participation that have been described are not reflected on a screen of abstract utopia. And it should be answered that the architecture of participation is a limit situation to which one must strive, even if one is aware that it will never be reached or - as they say - that it will be reached indefinitely.¹⁹

This emphasis evokes the original notion that participation does not exist but, rather, forms a horizon, a utopian vision in itself. De Carlo goes on to examine the common objections and ‘presumed limits’ of participation. Those he considers most serious relate to scale, that is, participation may be able to function among small social groups and over short time periods, but there are doubts around its feasibility in cases which ‘involve large ensembles of social groups’ and ‘long-term programs that override the immediacy of individual interests’.²⁰ Despite the setbacks he experienced in his attempt to implement a participatory process at the level of an entire city, as in Rimini, De Carlo is now seeking a formulation that is capable of dealing with the problems of ‘the entire human race.’ His proposition derives from his conception of the continual, iterative process described earlier in the thesis as the fundamental mechanism of the realistic utopia:

if on the grand scale participation is impossible, one must renounce to operate on a large scale, or - more precisely - one must reach the large scale through the integration of multiple operations that are carried out on a small scale; if over the long time span participation is impossible, one must renounce to operate on long spans, or - more precisely - one must envisage long spans only as concatenations of short spans.²¹

¹⁹ ‘A questo punto ci si potrebbe domandare se le proiezioni dell’architettura della partecipazione che sono state descritte non si riflettano su uno schermo di utopia astratta. E si dovrebbe rispondere che l’architettura della partecipazione è una situazione limite alla quale si deve tendere, anche se si ha la consapevolezza che non la si raggiungerà mai o - come si suol dire - che la si raggiungerà all’infinito.’ De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 52.

²⁰ De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 50.

²¹ ‘se sulla grande scala la partecipazione è impossibile, si deve rinunciare ad operare sulla grande scala, oppure - più esattamente - si deve pervenire alla grande scala attraverso l’integrazione di molteplici operazioni che si compiono a piccola scala; se sull’arco temporale lungo la partecipazione è impossibile, si deve rinunciare a operare su archi temporali lunghi. oppure - più esattamente si debbono prevedere archi temporali lunghi soltanto come concatenazioni di archi temporali brevi.’ De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 50.

Through the text he emphasises that participation involves much more than involvement in the act of design; its scope embraces all the moments of decision making:

The organization of physical space goes through a series of moments that involve decisions; Identification of the need to organize physical space, destination, location, investment of resources, definition of organizational types, formal configuration, technological interventions for implementation, use, management, technical obsolescence, recycling for changes in use, physical obsolescence.²²

In this way, De Carlo is seeking to add realism to his utopia. The experience of attempting to enact his theories in the projects of Rimini and Terni seems to have led him to develop his expanded notion of practice in much more specific terms so as to enable critical intervention at every stage of a building's realisation. This development is in line with his notion of participation as itself a realistic utopia, an image of a practice to be refined and developed over multiple iterations.

Over and above these many stages, which can vary and link in different cycles, De Carlo seeks a process through which the connections beyond the most immediate elements of the project can be traced, examined and taken as the subject of intervention: 'Participation in architecture therefore has the purpose of making people aware of the motivations and consequences of each spatial event anyone involved in it'.²³ Tracing the 'motivations' and 'consequences' of each spatial event is precisely the work of the realistic utopia. Here De Carlo underlines the importance of close analysis of the much broader network of consequences within which each architectural event is entangled:

participation must intervene in each of the moments through which the generation of the event passes; it must involve the immediate recipients, but also those who suffer consequences through the repercussions that the event produces on the context; it cannot be episodic nor can it end with the end of the event; just as it cannot begin with the beginning of its manifestation, because each event transfers into other events and is influenced by other transfers.²⁴

22 L'organizzazione dello spazio fisico passa attraverso una serie di momenti che comportano decisioni: Identificazione dell'esigenza di organizzare lo spazio fisico, destinazione, localizzazione, investimento di risorse, definizione dei tipi organizzativi, configurazione formale, interventi tecnologici per l'attuazione, uso, gestione, obsolescenza tecnica, riciclaggio per cambiamenti d'uso, obsolescenza fisica'. De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 51.

23 'La partecipazione in architettura ha dunque lo scopo di rendere consapevoli delle motivazioni e delle conseguenze di ogni evento spaziale chiunque vi sia coinvolto.' De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 51.

24 'Ma la partecipazione deve intervenire in ciascuno dei momenti attraverso i quali passa la generazione dell'evento; deve coinvolgere i destinatari immediati, ma anche chi subisce conseguenze attraverso le ripercussioni che l'evento produce sul contesto; non può essere episodica né può concludersi con la fine dell'evento; come non può cominciare con l'inizio del suo manifestarsi, perché ogni evento si trasferisce in altri eventi ed è influenzato da altri trasferimenti.' De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 51.

This description connects to De Carlo's earlier descriptions of reticulate processes, and underlines the fact that it was the 'episodic' approach to the building at Matteotti and the hypothesising in Rimini which were their most fundamental failures. What is crucial for De Carlo is that the process is continuous; each moment of the realistic utopia is an iteration, a 'tentative hypothesis'. Indeed, the generation and manipulation of processes becomes the conscious aim of architecture. Again, De Carlo returns to the formulation, explored explicitly through the figure of the realistic utopia, that it is in this regard that architecture can contribute to societal change, and he explicitly aligns this with his notion of unending process:

In the case of architecture - and therefore its activity of "design" - the point is to consider it, instead of as a broodmare of "objects", as the creator of "processes"; since these processes, in their superstructural substance, are oriented to produce material causes which contribute to modify the structure of society.²⁵

This is the essential point of difference in regard to his description of the rigid, standardised processes of housing production. The key problem was that decisions are always treated as absolute conclusions and could never be revisited. The iterative and self-critical nature of the process described as the realistic utopia is the antithesis of this. In his formulation, nothing is 'fixed', each move is tentative, seeking to be tested and replaced by something more finely tuned. Once again, he justifies this process because it brings a much-needed criticality to the practice of architecture, whereby the presumptions of the user, the architect, commerce and bureaucracy are all subjected to questioning:

The wisdom of the users is a myth, mirroring that of the infallibility of the technical specialist. [...] architects and users find themselves united in a state of alienation that leads them to chase, in various ways, the simulacra proposed by unruly consumerist idolatry or by narrow bureaucratic pomposity.²⁶

The means of 'liberating' both parties are fundamentally related to the role of the architect in producing images that are simultaneously critical and propositional. It is through this speculative process that the 'motivations and consequences' of architecture can be examined, and alternatives proposed:

²⁵ 'Nel caso dell'architettura - e quindi della sua attività di "progetto" - il punto è di considerarla, invece che come fattrice di "oggetti," come generatrice di "processi"; essendo questi processi, nella loro sostanza sovrastrutturale, orientati a produrre cause materiali che contribuiscano a modificare la struttura della società'. De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 52.

²⁶ 'La saggezza degli utenti è un mito, speculare a quello della infallibilità dello specialista tecnico [...] architetto e utenti si trovano accomunati in uno stato di alienazione che li induce a rincorrere, per diverse vie, i simulacri proposti dalla sregolata idolatria consumistica o dalla angusta pomposità burocratica.' De Carlo, "Altri appunti," 52.

It is his task to ignite the collective imagination by revealing the precariousness of the existing condition and providing images - as a hypothesis of a work that can involve himself and others - of what a different condition could be.²⁷

In this way, De Carlo finesses and moderates the core principles of the realistic utopia which, while not specifically naming them as such, he continues to advocate despite the difficulties of applying them in practice. Here, he adds significant nuance through the confrontation of scale by small iterative stages, and by the fundamental refocussing of architecture onto transforming the processes of building procurement. Yet, while he spends time critiquing the lack of participation in processes of building procurement, the fundamental question of how his proposed continual iteration of critique and proposition could be integrated with it is left unresolved.

“Altri appunti” can be read as De Carlo’s reconfirmation and justification of his previous commitments and positions on participation as a critical endeavour. This should be considered in light of the kinds of sceptical commentaries on the efficacy of participation in his project at Matteotti which were being published around the same time.²⁸ This text is delivered through a journal over which he had some level of editorial influence as a member of the *comitato direttivo* (steering committee) at the time. The following section considers a debate at the 1976 Venice Biennale, where De Carlo was much less in control of how his words would be interpreted and the responses he would receive. I will argue that it was the kinds of disciplinary reformulations represented in the debate, rather than any perceived failures of his projects in practice, which caused De Carlo to move away from his advocacy of speculative image making within an architecture of participation.

Speculation against Participation. Venice, 1976.

In the same year in which “Altri appunti” was published, De Carlo participated in the Venice Biennale. The 1976 Biennale was titled ‘Environment, Participation and Cultural Structures’ and featured three separate exhibitions dealing with architecture. The key exhibition, *Europa-America: architetture urbane, alternative suburbane* (Europe-America: Urban Architectures, Suburban Alternatives), was organised by De

²⁷ ‘E’ compito suo di accendere l’immaginazione collettiva rivelando la precarietà della condizione esistente e fornendo immagini - come ipotesi di un lavoro che possa coinvolgere sé stesso e gli altri’. De Carlo, “Altri appunti,” 53.

²⁸ See for example the critical perspectives discussed in Chapter 3: Sergio Bracco, “Un banco di prova nella conduzione della città,” *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 13-14; Naomi Miller, “Participatory Design: Case Study. Housing Development Matteoti of Giancarlo De Carlo,” *Progressive Architecture* 12 (1976): 74. Given the chronology, I am not arguing that ‘Altri appunti’ is a direct response to these articles; rather, that they can be read as representative of the kinds of critiques which De Carlo would have encountered by this time.

Carlo's former colleague at *Casabella continuità*, Vittorio Gregotti, and featured works by many of the leading architects of the time. On the day of the exhibition's opening, an 'open debate' was organised between many of the exhibitors at the Palazzo del Cinema, Lido de Venezia entitled "Quale movimento moderno" (Which Modern Movement).²⁹ The format was unusual in many respects. In contrast to the public lectures or 'closed' discussions that had typified the CIAM and Team X meetings, this event brought together many of the leading practitioners of contemporary architecture and had them debate in front of the general public. The participants were arranged in three rows facing the audience, a format which led some to compare the discussion to a 'politburo'.³⁰ The debate has attracted scholarly interest in recent years, particularly due to its significance in the development of a separate biennale for architecture and as a turning point towards postmodernism.³¹ Its significance for this thesis lies in the specific contribution by De Carlo and its subsequent discussion by other participants. Whereas the other episodes explored in this chapter provide insights into De Carlo's conceptual structures through his own detailed texts, in which he held control, the debate presents a unique opportunity to observe some of the diverse critical reactions of De Carlo's contemporaries to his thoughts and propositions.

The debate highlights some of the deep ideological fractures between the diverse critical reactions to modernism and the fierce disagreement over the future direction of architecture. Although the debate was framed as one between the Europeans and Americans as opposing camps, the situation was, of course, more complex.³² Aldo Rossi positioned himself with John Hejduk and Raimund Abraham, while Denise Scott-Brown positioned herself with the Smithsons. The geographic divisions intersected with generational ones. The reformist members of Team X (the Smithsons, van Eyk and De Carlo) found themselves representing a kind of 'old guard' who continued to hold onto ideals of functionalism and humanism. There is some agreement that the modernists' ambitions of social reform were unrealistic: De Carlo acknowledges that architecture can achieve 'no revolution' and Scott-Brown makes clear that 'we will not change the world'.

De Carlo speaks only once during the debate, roughly in the middle of the proceedings, and his is one of the longer contributions, lasting for three pages in the typed transcript. Prior to his speech, the discussion was a somewhat meandering and disconnected series of statements, positions and critiques of both the

²⁹ Raggi, "Quale movimento moderno," 174-182.

³⁰ 'Anche per il fatto che la disposizione di questi tavoli ricordano probabilmente in tutti i sensi un "politburo" Carlo Aymonino, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, IAUS fonds, CCA, 3.

³¹ Léa-Catherine Szacka provides a thorough analysis of the debate in these terms. Lea Catherine Szacka, "Debates on Display at the 1976 Venice Biennale" in *Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture*, eds. Thordis Arrhenius, Mari Lending, Wallis Miller and Jérémie Michael McGowan, (Zurich: Lars Müller, 2014): 97-102.

³² The North American connections and influences on De Carlo's ideas of participation and the realistic utopia were discussed in Chapter 2.

exhibition format and the location of the debate. De Carlo's contribution animated the ensuing debate. Raimund Abraham, who spoke directly after De Carlo, credited him with introducing the first polemic into the discussion.³³ Following Abraham, De Carlo's speech was explicitly discussed and contested by Oriol Bohigas, Aldo van Eyck, Manfredi Tafuri, Peter Eisenman, Álvaro Siza, Denise Scott Brown, Oswald Matthias Ungers, Emilio Ambasz and Carlo Aymonino. Through both De Carlo's speech, and his colleagues commentaries on it the broader disciplinary context in which De Carlo was attempting to pursue his notion of participation is revealed.

In his contribution, De Carlo rejects the contributions of the Americans and unnamed European 'non-friends' as two-dimensional, as playing little games of irony, of retreating from the task of organising space for the benefit of its users.³⁴ For De Carlo, rather than making 'little winks' to reveal their anxieties about the present client, architecture should locate a new client, the real 'close protagonist' of the architecture. He draws two key distinctions in his speech. The first is between individual analyses and collective action:

The reality of architecture is not a simple equation, rather it is a complex system. The variables of the architecture are numerous, and these variables must first be collected, then organized and analysed as a system. To do this cannot be a solitary job. It must be a job that involves collective participation.³⁵

The second is between 'real architecture' and two-dimensional representation:

architecture is the organisation of space in three dimensions and one cannot escape from this point, ... the subtraction of one of these dimensions or even the subtraction of space as a whole leads to a field of action that has nothing to do with architecture... The scope of architecture is to help improve the situation of human beings in the exercise of their activities in space.³⁶

³³ 'I am very happy of the statement De Carlo has made because it is the first one today that introduces any kind of polemic moves in the discussion.' Raimund Abraham, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 28. Abraham goes on to label De Carlo's position as totalitarian and fascist.

³⁴ The reference to European 'non-friends' could be taken as a reference to the work of Rossi, and perhaps the Austrian Abraham, who was exhibiting as an 'American.'

³⁵ 'La realtà della architettura non è una equazione semplice. ma è un sistema complesso. Le variabili della architettura sono numerose, e questi variabili prima bisogna raccoglierle, poi organizzarle e poi organizzarle in sistema che debbono essere risolti e raccoglierle non può essere un lavoro solitario. Deve essere un lavoro che implica una partecipazione collettiva.' Giancarlo De Carlo, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 24-25.

³⁶ 'l'architettura è organizzazione dello spazio in tre dimensioni' e non si può scappare da questo punto, 'è organizzazione dello spazio in tre dimensioni', la sottrazione di una di queste dimensioni o addirittura la sottrazione dello spazio nel suo complesso porta in un campo di azione che non ha nulla a che fare con la architettura. La destinazione della architettura d'altra parte è quella di risolvere alcuni problemi di "consistenza nello spazio," della società umana dei gruppi sociali, e degli esseri umani in generale intesi come individui. Lo scope della architettura è di contribuire a migliorare la situazione degli esseri umani nell'esercizio delle loro attività nello spazio.' De Carlo, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 25.

There is a stark contrast in the images of the projects presented in the catalogue. While the Europeans mainly focused on past projects, documented through photographs, the Americans opted instead to produce new, speculative projects as individual explorations and reflections on the suburban phenomenon in North America. As noted above De Carlo's critique was equally directed at 'certain European non-friends'), by which we could infer a reference to Aldo Rossi, who similarly presented a group of drawings, models and collages.³⁷ De Carlo saw in these paper-architecture projects an abandonment of architecture's true social purpose, a disregard for the human subject or the relationships between people mediated by architecture. In the exhibition, both De Carlo and Rossi presented housing projects, Matteotti and Gallarate respectively (Figure 4.1). Manfredo Tafuri in his *History of Italian Architecture* considered the two as amongst the most significant of the period, contrasting the 'process' of Matteotti with the 'object' of Aymonino and Rossi: 'While the Matteotti village forces one to examine procedure, the Monte Amiata complex in Gallarate presents itself as a completed object'.³⁸

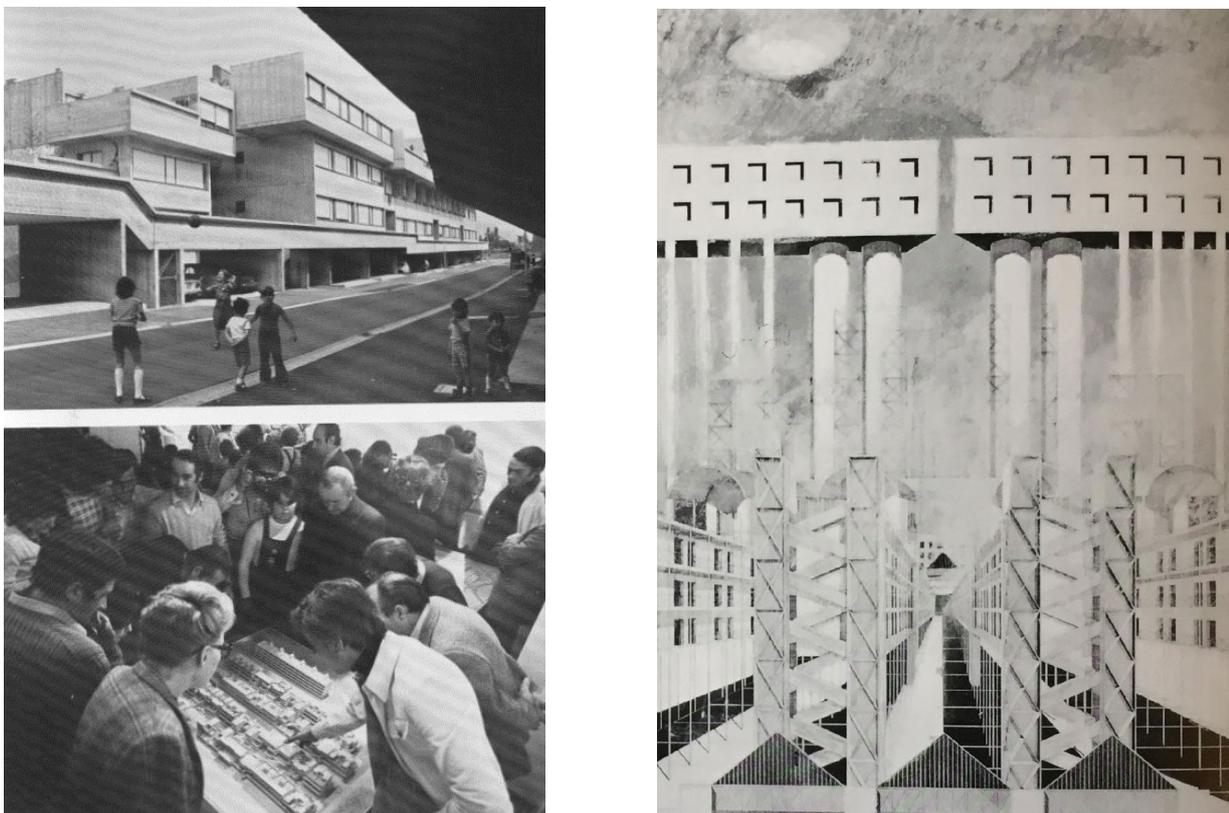


Figure 4.1. Images of two projects from the exhibition catalogue. De Carlo's Matteotti in Terni highlights process, featuring lots of people pointing at models in which the building forms are difficult to see. Rossi's Gallarate is presented not in its actual form but as a kind of perfect vision, a utopia that by now had actually been built and from which people are conspicuously absent. Source: Franco Raggi, ed., *Europa-America: architetture urbane, alternative suburbane*. (Venezia: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978). 23, 54.

³⁷ The long running antipathy between De Carlo and Rossi is introduced in Chapter 2.

³⁸ Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, trans. Jessica Levine (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 122.

Although the other speakers frequently referred to De Carlo's position, it was not engaged with in the terms which De Carlo explicitly raised for discussion, such as the search for the 'new client'. Rather, the dispute was around his core notion of architecture. Immediately after De Carlo came Raimund Abraham, an Austrian architect who had relocated to America and exhibited his speculative drawing work 'Seven gates of Eden' amongst the Americans. Abraham immediately took the discussion in another direction. He rejected the idea of a singular 'architecture' with a singular mission as fascist and authoritarian. For him, there was no 'architecture', only multiple 'architectures'. This positioning was in line with the feeling expressed by many in response to De Carlo, particularly the Americans, who claimed formal experimentation was being restricted by the prioritisation of social concern. Scott Brown had laid out this argument explicitly in an article for *Oppositions* the year before: 'Architects and urban designers should be able to undertake the analysis of form without receiving brickbats from their colleagues or from social planners on lack of social concern'.³⁹ At the debate, she emphasised, as a rebuttal to De Carlo, that her own work was not a 'picture' but rather an analysis of suburbia in order to seek genuine social relevance for architecture.⁴⁰ Eisenman went much further, staking a claim for architecture as equally valid when it had no explicit connection to people, as a pure interest in the art itself. He proposed that developing the formal aspects of architecture could be done in 'parallel' to a more socially concerned architecture.⁴¹ What drew these reactions together was their claim that architects like De Carlo were placing artificial restrictions on what architecture could be.⁴²

Two key divergences underlie the many arguments and insults. The first is set up as an opposition between an architecture with a mission, a social commitment, and an architecture of plurality, unlimited by 'boy-scout' morality. Overall, the sentiment was that De Carlo represented a kind of outmoded moralism in architecture, a believer in the 'church'.⁴³ Even his Team 10 colleague van Eyck called him out for being such a 'boy-scout'.⁴⁴ While there was a common recognition that architecture in the modern period had failed in its social mission, there were powerful differences in how to address this: to move closer to society (De Carlo, Scott Brown), or to move deeper into architecture (Eisenman, Rossi). A clear division was presented: participants were either interested in concrete realities, in finding better ways to serve people, in reforming the mission, or they were cutting themselves free from the social and political

³⁹ Denise Scott Brown, "On Architectural Formalism and Social Concern: A Discourse of Social Planners and Radical Chic Architects," *Oppositions* 5 (Summer 1976):112.

⁴⁰ Denise Scott Brown, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 40.

⁴¹ Peter Eisenman, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 35.

⁴² More recently Geert Baekert has spoken about the dominance of 'social' perspectives at the Biennale: 'in Venice in 1976, it was mainly sociologists, social workers and plumbers who did the talking.' Geert Bekaert, Christophe Van Gerrewey, and Véronique Patteeuw. " 'Architecture Can't Help Exposing Itslef': In Conversation with Geert Bekaert," *OASE* 88 (2012): 110.

⁴³ Abraham, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 26.

⁴⁴ Aldo van Eyck, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 27.

‘baggage’ (as Eisenman called it) of functionalism to pursue deeper truths in architecture. Léa-Catherine Szacka, who has written extensively on the Biennale, quotes from a later report into the debate which defined the two contrasting positions as between ‘the architects who work with institutions as a mediator for the interests of the community’ and ‘those who see architecture as a language for expressing a personal vision in which the architect experiments in a way which might be called poetic’.⁴⁵

The apparent split between a ‘moral’ and a ‘pluralist’ approach reveals a conflict within the conception of participation more broadly. While participation had become associated with the post-modern drive for pluralism, diversity and freedom, for De Carlo it was fundamentally rooted in maintaining that stream of modernist social morality which required architecture to use its power to provide a measure of equality in terms of spatial decision making. Architecture’s capacity to do this was becoming increasingly constrained within the emerging pluralist attitude towards architectural practice. Although the pluralist approach derived from a critique of welfare-state authoritarianism similar to that implied in De Carlo’s theories, it pointed to its replacement by market-driven provision of services. As discussed in the next chapter, this move away from the welfare state as producer of the built environment significantly diminished the potential for architecture to invite participation.

A second related split, which has direct bearing on discussions of the realistic utopia, was that between the ambitions of participation and the tools of speculation. In the preceding decades, there had been many speculative projects outlining the possibilities for people’s participation in architecture and architecture’s broader social role, such as the works of Constant Nieuwenhuys, Yona Freidman and Cedric Price.⁴⁶ In contrast, the speculative works presented by Abraham, Rossi, Hejduk and others at the Biennale seem to have turned towards subjective experience and exclusively formal exercises with architecture as its own end; as such they were dismissed by De Carlo. This has specific bearing on De Carlo’s formulation of the realistic utopia. In his original descriptions of that concept, De Carlo had made clear that speculative image-making had a crucial role to play in the architecture of participation. From this point on, De Carlo no longer speaks in these terms, maintaining his commitment to participation and positioning it as an opposite tendency to that of speculative image-making.

In view of the apparent split between the ‘speculative’ and the ‘participatory’, the contribution of the historian Manfredo Tafuri, is important. Tafuri, speaking from the audience in response to some surprising and violent invective against him from Aldo van Eyck, ‘enters dialectics’ with De Carlo in his

⁴⁵ Szacka, “Debates on Display at the 1976 Venice Biennale,” 103.

⁴⁶ As discussed in Chapter 2, Lucius Burckhardt made connections between some of these urban utopian visions and the possibilities of more participatory urban decision making: Lucius Burckhardt, “On the Value and Meaning of Urban Utopias (1968),” in *Lucius Burckhardt Writings*, ed. Jesko Fezer and Martin Schmitz (Vienna: Springer-Verlag, 2012), 63-76.

use of the terms ‘society’ and ‘man’ neither of which he ‘recognises’.⁴⁷ Although he agreed in large part with De Carlo’s assessment of the presented works, which he defined as variations of ‘collage’ and as the works of ‘bad painters’, he nonetheless linked them to De Carlo’s own project, which he described as having ‘a strong tendency to consider the possibility of a construction of the architectural code as in a laboratory; that is to say to be able to isolate the linguistic discourse’.⁴⁸ De Carlo had characterised the work of Rossi and the Americans as fixating on ‘little anxieties’; Tafuri agreed, but also denied the possibility of dealing with the ‘great anxieties’ as they had been all consumed. For Tafuri, ‘the ‘great anxiety’ was that of not knowing how to live on an enchanted mountain any more’.⁴⁹ He returned to this metaphor in his conclusion, which can be read equally as a critique of those who detach themselves from the reality of the street and of De Carlo’s own blanket denunciation of associating with power:

probably the road that transforms institutions, which enters into the discourse of power, is that language that wants to descend from the mountain to get dirty with the road, with the city, with power, in fact.⁵⁰

This passage is particularly interesting to consider in term of De Carlo’s realistic utopia, which, in its own way, can be read as an attempt to enter the ‘discourse of power’ and ‘transform institutions’ by moving *between* the ‘enchanted mountain’ of architectural speculation and the ‘dirty’ roads of participating in the city. While De Carlo did not speak in these terms at the debate, two other voices construct notions which can be seen to be aligned to it: the Portuguese Álvaro Siza and the German Oswald Matthias Ungers. Siza was at that time beginning to establish an international reputation based on the housing projects of Bouça and Sao Victor, which were conducted through participatory means as part of the SAAL (*Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local* - Mobile Service for Local Support) brigades which transformed housing provision across Portugal following the Portuguese revolution of 1974.⁵¹ Although his contribution was short and passed by without comment from any other participant, it is of significance for a reading of the relations between architectures of participation and the practice of speculative modes of design. Like many of the speakers who followed De Carlo, Siza did not agree with him, albeit for different reasons

⁴⁷ ‘So if Tafuri is here, I like to tell him that I dislike him, what he says more: I think he is absolutely horrific nauseating cynic, very stupid, he just tasted bad, he does not realise how disgusting he is, the influence he has’. Van Eyck, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 29. Van Eyck also proposes ‘capital punishment’ for the ‘pseudo-Tafuris’ in Holland. Other quotes by Manfredo Tafuri, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 32.

⁴⁸ Tafuri, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 31

⁴⁹ ‘La « grande angoscia » à quella di non sapere più vivere in una montagna incantata’. Tafuri, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 30-31

⁵⁰ ‘la strada che trasforma le istituzioni, che entra dentro il discorso del potere è quel linguaggio che vuole scendere dalla montagna per sporcarsi con la strada, con la città, con Il potere, appunto.’ Tafuri, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 32.

⁵¹ An extensive account of the SAAL, of which Siza was a contributor in the Porto brigades, is provided in Delfim Sardo, ed., *The SAAL Process: Architecture and Participation 1974-1976* (Serralves: Porto, 2014). As noted previously, this publication includes a reprint of De Carlo’s ‘Architecture’s Public.’

from the others. Rather than problematising De Carlo's conceptions of either architecture or society, Siza wanted to speak about their relationship, as mediated through participation and explicitly tied to his recent experience in the SAAL brigades in Portugal which, around the time of the conference, were being shut down by the housing bureaucracy.⁵² Siza's disagreement was with De Carlo's seeming rejection of solitary research, despite his claims that architecture 'can not be a solitary job' and his critiques of the images by the Americans and Rossi. For Siza, this kind of research should not be viewed as a distraction or indulgence but, rather, as a crucial element in a participatory project as it is the only space in which the architect can go beyond the surface of 'what people want' to really confront the deeper structures and manipulations at work.

Yet this personal research can be extremely important, because when the time comes that we feel politically favourable, it is often lacking this kind of support that can carry forward the theme of architecture with creative proposals.⁵³

This disagreement highlights the extent to which the position adopted by De Carlo at the Venice debate had lost a key aspect of its former nuance. In previous statements, Siza and De Carlo had both expressed reservations about the idea that people's stated preferences, often artificially adopted from pre-existing models, could be taken genuine expressions of their needs.⁵⁴ For this reason, De Carlo warned against participation framed as a process in which the 'users dictate and the architect transcribe'.⁵⁵ Instead, he promoted a process through which the architect and the users conduct a kind of critical collaborative research into the 'real' needs which, far from being taken as given by 'the people', formed one of the three key stages of his proposed 'process planning'. Álvaro Siza, describing the role of technicians in the SAAL process in *Lotus*, rejected 'simplistic positions, such as: learn with the people or teach them'; instead, he emphasised the need to establish a 'dialectic relationship with the present ideas of the population'.⁵⁶ It is in such a 'dialectical relationship' that the realistic utopia, as one of a series of

⁵² An excellent analysis of Siza's involvement in the SAAL projects is provided by Nelson Mota, *An Archaeology of the Ordinary. Rethinking the Architecture of Dwelling from CLAM to Siza* (Delft: Delft University of Technology, 2014).

⁵³ 'La condizione in cui lavora un architetto quando politicamente lavora nella impossibilità di stabilire questo rapporto. produce fatalmente quando questo avviene in una posizione politica non soddisfacente, non possibile ai tre aspetti descritti da D Carlo quando ha parlato della mostra che si ridurrebbero a due. Cioè conduce solo a due condizioni, una che è quella dell'abbandonarsi al potere dell'accordarsi con il potere, oppure dell'essere distaccato e condurre una ricerca assolutamente solitaria. Eppure questa ricerca personale può essere estremamente importante, perché quando venga il momento che ci sentiamo politicamente favorevole spesso manca proprio questo tipo di supporto che possa condurre avanti con delle proposte creative il tema della architettura. Per esempio nel caso del Portogallo è successo che il lavoro congiunto delle brigate di tecnici e di operai dell'edilizia. Nella prima fase avveniva la seguente condizione, che la classe operaia impegnata in questa operazione riproponeva i vecchi modelli copiati dalla classe borghese. E come tali facilmente manipolabili.' Álvaro Siza, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 37.

⁵⁴ This position can be connected to Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefavre's critique of populism, which is discussed in the next chapter.

⁵⁵ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Il Pubblico Dell'Architettura," *Parametro* 5, (1970): 11.

⁵⁶ Álvaro Siza, "The Line of Action of the Technicians as Technicians," *Lotus International* 13 (1976): 87.

‘hypothetical’ images, plays a key role.⁵⁷ In ‘Il Pubblico’, De Carlo proposed ‘a preliminary activity of information and criticism aimed at exposing all the imposed value systems, dissipating the alienation which the centuries old imposition of these systems has produced’.⁵⁸ This attitude was evident at Matteotti, where the very first engagement with the potential future residents was an exhibition of alternative housing types designed ‘to make conflicts explode from the very first movement with a disruptive trigger’.⁵⁹ Despite the clear importance of this nuanced approach in his earlier work, De Carlo’s position at the debate appears to be interpreted by Siza as a more dogmatic and uncritical form of participation.

Oswald Matthias Ungers articulated another position which explicitly sought to overcome the various schisms present at the debate.⁶⁰ His own contribution set out a notion not dissimilar to that of the realistic utopia in terms of the critical role of architectural speculations as stimuli for participation:

The world exists through your imagination, or through the imagination of the architects, who build of course his imagination, or designs, or tears it out and exposes it. To what is called the people, or what is called participation, that they can participate on the dreams on the imagination that you have of reality in order to improve it.⁶¹

Ungers’ brief statement here reiterates in some ways the sentiment of the Team 10 ‘Portions of a document’ from the 1969 meeting, where the role of the architect in a process of participation is to provide ‘dreams’.⁶² This is tied explicitly to the understanding of ‘reality’ and the drive to ‘improve it’ which, for Ungers, was the key component of humanism, a term which he claimed had been misunderstood by preceding speakers, such as Eisenman, who had called for its replacement by other models.⁶³ In Ungers’ formulation, it is in imagining ways to improve reality that people’s participation could have real benefit.

⁵⁷ While Siza makes no claims to be pursuing the goals expressed in De Carlo’s writings, his practice and associated texts provide a fertile site for observing the possibilities of De Carlo’s realistic utopia in a practice outside of his own.

⁵⁸ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 12.

⁵⁹ De Carlo, “Alla ricerca,” 18.

⁶⁰ “The discussion that divides people into “progressive” and “proletarians,” the “formalist” versus the “functionalist” and the “fascist” versus the “democrat” or “boy-scout” versus the “idealists””. O. M. Ungers, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 40.

⁶¹ Ungers, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 41. Spelling errors in the original transcript have been corrected for readability: ‘The world exists through your immagination, or through the immagination of the architects, who build of course his immagination, or designs, or tears it out and exposes it. To what is called the people, or what is called partecipation. that they can partecipate on the dreams on the immagination that you have of reality in order to improve it’.

⁶² Team 10, “Portion of a document; Team 10 December 1969”, in *The Emergence of Team 10 out of C.I.A.M.*, comp. Alison Smithson (London: Architectural Association, 1982): 92. This is discussed in Chapter 2. While Ungers was not present at this meeting, he did attend others, including the somewhat controversially expanded 1966 meeting in Urbino which immediately preceded this one and was itself the cause of schism within the group.

⁶³ Eisenman, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, 35.

Both Ungers and Siza avoided drawing a bold line between the poetic and the political, between the formal and the social or, above all, between speculative drawing practice and concrete social action. In this respect they can be seen to emphasise the value of the solitary work of the architect which De Carlo himself avoided making explicit, despite the fact that it was closer to the way he worked in participatory processes such as in Matteotti. This is precisely the space which is required for the production of the critical-propositional images implied by the realistic utopia. It is also interesting to note here that, while De Carlo withdrew from projects of 'direct' participation at this time, Siza continued for the next two decades to work on participatory housing projects in Berlin, the Hague and Evora. That it was left to Ungers and Siza to provide these more nuanced understandings of participation, which approach De Carlo's former concept, is perhaps indicative of his drift away from it. Although almost every subsequent speaker questioned his terms, he never returned to defend them. In his one contribution, he was clearly dismayed by the associations of the speculative practices on display at the exhibition and, as such, apparently rejected any possibility for this kind of practice. This understanding was reiterated in a more curated address given by De Carlo in London two years later.

Withdrawal and Continuity. London, 1978.

In May 1978, De Carlo delivered the Inaugural Thomas Cubitt lecture in London.⁶⁴ This invitation to give the first of a series intended to promote and raise standards of architecture was testament to his by-now established status as a representative of the architectural establishment. The lecture marked a significant change in tone from the fiery rhetoric of "Il pubblico", *An Architecture of Participation* and "Altri appunti". As noted by the then editor of the *Architectural Association Quarterly*, Dennis Sharp:

One of the most surprising aspects of Giancarlo de Carlo's brilliant 'Thomas Cubitt Lecture' (...) was its freedom from political themes. A number of us has suspected it might include some of that public participatory Italian so-called 'Marxist' theorising that throws English Liberals into utter confusion. But none was there.⁶⁵

Here, De Carlo was speaking in a very different context. Less than ten years earlier, he had introduced an architectural counterculture. By the late 1970s, a range of tools and methods and a new ideology related to participatory architectural practice had been established. In the UK, where he was speaking,

⁶⁴ De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture*.

⁶⁵ Dennis Sharp, "De Carlo at the Institution," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 10, no.2 (1978): 1.

government-funded community technical aid centres had already been established. While it was not yet mainstream practice, the idea of participation was no longer radical. It should be noted that the intellectual left in Italy was in crisis at the time and was ameliorating its radical language in response to having been cast as implicated in the political violence of groups such as the Red Brigades. The lecture can also in some ways be read as a direct response to the Lido conference two years earlier, covering as it does issues of architecture and morality and architecture's relationship to society in much more ambivalent terms than he had previously used. He also constantly circles around 'eclecticism' and its dangers for architecture, attributing this eclecticism to a struggle to maintain a viable role for architecture as demand for it dies. He is most critical of the emergence of the kind of 'paper architecture' practised by many of his interlocutors at Venice, such as Rossi, Eisenman and Abraham, who remain unnamed:

As a result they prefer to concentrate on drawings, working on them to produce art pieces that cannot be reproduced, manipulating them to make them as uncommunicative as possible, and finally putting them on sale in art galleries. In this way consumption is sublimated, by putting language on the market in its pure state, before it is organised into its own structures that give it significance.⁶⁶

By this time, De Carlo had begun to evaluate and critique the results of the various attempts at participation in architecture. In his view, these were too often separated into purely functional and purely qualitative approaches which needed to be reconnected to 'restore the circuit of relationships between the physical configurations and their real motivations and their concrete consequences'.⁶⁷ De Carlo seems to have been reacting against the many emerging currents of post modernism and was troubled by the ways in which his own calls for participation had aligned with them rhetorically.

⁶⁶ De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture*, 10. Although they are not named, an assumption could be that De Carlo is discussing the work of his interlocutors at the Venice debate such as Abraham, Eisenman and Rossi.

⁶⁷ De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture*, 14.

Rather than attempting to reclaim participation, as had been the focus of 'Altri appunti', here De Carlo goes back to basics and attempts to re-focus on what is essential, both to the modern movement and to architecture in general. For De Carlo, architecture is the process that arranges space and form in relation to both external forces and the internal needs of the occupants as an expression of their own lives. The process of architecture, as De Carlo describes it here, goes beyond the individual building, becoming a means of communication through generations. He refers to a description of a gesture described by the Florentine Renaissance architect Antonio Averlino, known as Filarete (1400-1469), of 'how Adam, on a stormy day, faced with God who was chasing him from Eden, linked his hands over his head as if to form a roof, to make a form that would protect him from divine anger and from the rain'.⁶⁸ This image becomes for De Carlo the original gesture of architecture:

The image of Filarete says, therefore, that the aim of architecture is not to produce "objects" but to give organisation and form to the space in which human events occur; to develop "processes", which eventually give rise to physical configurations, but in fact begin before these configurations materialise and continue after their dissolution, living on in the memory and projecting themselves on other processes.⁶⁹

While the understanding of architecture as the generator of processes rather than objects had already been firmly established in his earlier texts as something that architecture 'should do', here it becomes a fundamental redefinition of what architecture is and always has been. Architecture is the idea of building, the gesture that precedes the 'physical configuration' and which is able to live on after the physical artefact, travelling and influencing future processes and their translation into objects. It is an architecture beyond the object. As articulated in Chapter 2, the realistic utopia can be seen as a culmination of De Carlo's long-held interest in understanding architecture beyond its status as form. In the Cubitt lecture, this becomes not just an attempt to reform architecture, but a redefinition of architecture. Architecture, at its most essential, transcends the 'physical configuration'. At the same time, and again opposed to architecture as a speculative or 'paper' activity, it is meaningless without reference to the object as a built reality.

⁶⁸ De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture*, 10.

⁶⁹ De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture*, 11.

The idea of an underlying essence is developed further in a passage addressing the supposed death of the modern movement. De Carlo describes the many deaths and rebirths of the modern movement to arrive at what he considers its most defining principle: a return to its authentic essence by disentangling itself from the requirements of power:

Therefore, the Modern Movement died many times. And each time it was reborn, because, despite of the blow received at each death, under its ashes the matrix that had generated its previous existences remained intact: this was the principle that architecture, if it is to find again its most authentic essence, must be disentangled from the requirements of the power.⁷⁰

This is a curious and uncommon reading of the fundamental essence of either architecture in general or the modern movement in particular. It reveals most profoundly De Carlo's very particular position, one which he has clearly drawn from his predecessors. While in his foundational texts and lectures the architecture of participation is positioned as an antagonist to the modern movement, here it is explicitly framed as the continuation of its 'underlying matrix' to disentangle architecture from the requirements of power. It is also the most authentic continuation of the true essence of architecture understood as a process, which extends beyond any particular building or set of buildings.

Although he makes no mention of the realistic utopia, this understanding provides a means to both extend and generalise his earlier concept. Architecture is the generator of images that draw from and enact processes to form objects. It is in finding a way to return to this underlying matrix that the notion of participation reappears: 'if architecture is to be disentangled from the requirements of the power then it needs to find or even invent a new type of client'.⁷¹ While at first glance the lecture may seem, as Dennis Sharp had taken it, to be a move away from a critical political stance related to participation, the reality is that De Carlo was in fact articulating a way for it to be more deeply, if subtly buried within the very essence of architecture.

De Carlo's project, articulated through *An Architecture of Participation* and exemplified by the figure of the realistic utopia, is in this way linked to the fundamental essence both of the modern movement and of architecture itself. Throughout *An Architecture of Participation*, De Carlo uses the metaphor of a fork-road, a choice for architecture to continue to follow its flawed practices until it becomes completely irrelevant to society, or to proceed 'in a new direction towards the architecture of participation'.⁷² In London, seven

⁷⁰ De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture*, 7.

⁷¹ De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture*, 7.

⁷² De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25.

years later, De Carlo returned to the metaphor, but now with an inverted meaning, this time advocating a continuation. De Carlo ended his lecture by laying out the choice facing architecture: to take the path of withdrawal or the path of deep commitment to the work of architecture as a process and the critical legacy of those who have always sought to disentangle architecture from power.⁷³

In terms of the realistic utopia, De Carlo's reformulation is telling. While he is highly critical of the contemporary practice of architects making images in their 'pure state', he simultaneously places his earlier notion of critical image making at the heart of his re-conception of architecture. The key difference is that the critical images he advocates are never considered separately from the physical buildings towards which they are aimed. In some ways, then, this can then be read as a continuation of his argument that the only valid utopia is a realistic one.

The 'Underlying Matrix' of the Realistic Utopia.

The period between the termination of his largest scale participatory projects and the republication of *An Architecture of Participation* from which the realistic utopia had been omitted was one in which De Carlo's theorisation of a critical form of participation in architecture was challenged on a number of fronts. The article "Altri appunti" reveal De Carlo's attempts to maintain his theories in response to the disappointing results of Terni and Rimini. Here his notion of iterative cycles of critique and proposition are shown to be incompatible with the realities of building procurement in its current form. The debate "Quale movimento moderno" at the Lido in Venice reveals broader shifts in politics and architecture in which clear lines are drawn between an architecture of social commitment and an architecture of speculative exploration. The realistic utopia, understood as the practice of speculative image making towards the generation of social change, is brought into crisis by this split and De Carlo grows increasingly critical of speculative forms of architecture at the same time as he moves away from direct forms of participation.

In his 1978 lecture, "Reflections on the Present State of Architecture", De Carlo is highly critical of speculative image-making practices in architecture. Yet at the same time he takes his broad notion of the image and uses it in a very particular way to understand architecture. He describes architecture not as a building but as a way to communicate through generations. Here, architecture for De Carlo is the spirit,

⁷³ De Carlo associates the path of 'withdrawal' with those architects who pursue a purely drawing practice. This argument aligns with the later historic analysis of Kaminer in *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation*.

the idea, which precedes a building and lives after it is demolished. This becomes a de-materialised way of understanding architecture, no longer tied only to objects but, rather, to be found in the images and processes from which buildings are produced. For De Carlo, the fundamental purpose of these critical images and processes is to disentangle architecture from power. In this way they come very close to the ideas of the realistic utopia.

The realistic utopia, mentioned by De Carlo in only one text and developed over only four pages, has been extensively analysed and unpacked over these four chapters. I have argued that, despite its relatively minor presence within De Carlo's writings, it provides an overall framework for the development of his thinking from the early 1950s around how practices of architecture could establish and maintain criticality towards the systems and structures of power and influence which frame their interventions. I have identified the practice of speculative image making as a crucial component of this formulation of criticality. In this framework, his project of participation can be understood in its entirety as such an image, directed toward changing not the objects of architecture but its processes. The image of participation is critical of established processes and proposes their replacement by an image of other processes. I have also argued, using his experiments in practice as key examples, that such critical-propositional images are also a key tool within that reformed process. The means by which these speculative images can approach the social realities they seek to transform is by attending to the vast network of relationships and interactions at play. This attendance is enabled by a distinctly iterative process in which each image is opened up to critique and reformulation through participation.

By 1980, when *Perspecta* published the abridged version of *An Architecture of Participation*—without the realistic utopia—De Carlo had shifted his focus away from direct forms of participation and had grown wary of association with the use of speculative images by his contemporaries. At the same time, however, his conception of architecture as a process in which particular images persist and influence other occurrences, as introduced in “Reflections”, offers this thesis the possibility of detaching the images of the realistic utopia from De Carlo's own practice, to see them as ‘gestures’ that can be observed in other times, places and practices. The following chapters explore the possibilities of the realistic utopia concept beyond the figure of De Carlo himself.

Part 2. Critical Participation beyond De Carlo.

5. Participation After the Realistic Utopia

The previous four chapters have focussed on excavating the realistic utopia from the work of Giancarlo De Carlo, who coined the term, through a close analysis of De Carlo's texts, the contexts in which he was operating and his experiments in practice. The realistic utopia has emerged from this analysis as a distinct element within his broader understanding of participation. It provides a conceptual framework within which architecture can establish and maintain productive criticality towards the relational structures and systems which frame its interventions. I have defined its key component as the iterative production of critical-propositional images aimed always at their own revision. As I argued in Chapter 4, De Carlo's own theorisation of the mobility of architectural conceptions allows the concept of the realistic utopia to be taken up by others, even as De Carlo himself appears to discard the term in his own writings. This chapter moves beyond De Carlo to explore the relevance of the realistic utopia for practices of participatory architecture as they have developed since his formulation of the realistic utopia in 1970.

The chapter traces the establishment over time of a participatory architecture discourse, delineating important contributions and critiques from others besides De Carlo.¹ A series of critical perspectives are discussed chronologically and in context. Consideration is given both to how each is situated as a response to the broader conditions of its time and to the continuities, breaks and developments between these major contributions. The key moments addressed are: the participatory planning discourse of North America in the late 1960s, the concurrent debates on housing and populism in Europe, the regularisation of participation in forms such as the Community Architecture movement in the UK in the 1980s, and the resurgent interest in participation as a transformative practice from the early 2000s. Diagrams are used to illustrate the relationships of power and influence between the various actors involved in each image of participation, thereby articulating the perceived agency of 'the people' or 'the user' in relation to structures of power and the role of the architect implicit in each formulation.

This chapter makes use of a strategically limited set of projects and practices to provide an overview of certain major tendencies, positions and critiques on participation in architecture. The key criteria in selecting the practices under discussion has been to highlight key problems regarding the possibility of

¹ While most contributions come from within the specific disciplinary debates of architecture, some are from the fields of participation in planning (Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (July 1969): 216-224) and art (Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012).) Those cited here have been influential on the disciplinary debates of architecture.

maintaining criticality in practices of participation. The approach means some highly important and influential practices and movements don't figure prominently in the discussion. Notable among these are practices of participation that developed from the 1970s onwards in the Global South (primarily addressing self-built settlements without formal land-tenure) and the Feminist Design Collectives that emerged in a similar period, primarily in the UK. While not explicitly discussed here as self-contained moments, these movements could be understood as foundational to the contemporary practices attempting critical forms of participation.² Rather than an expansive, or laudatory, genealogy of the development of participatory practice, though (offering a sample of 'best-practice' or 'key contributors' in the field), this selection highlights moments in which the tensions of participatory practice become most evident. The selection focuses on a set of practices through which particular problems and contradictions can be most concisely observed and discussed.

Fundamentally, this chapter returns to the central question addressed in this thesis, namely, how practices of participatory architecture can maintain criticality towards the systems of power and influence in which they operate. It explains the importance of such a question within the field by assembling those critical voices that have most clearly articulated the fundamental internal contradictions operating within participatory practice and discourse as it has developed since the time of De Carlo's theorisations. These voices attribute the perceived failure of participatory architecture to achieve its emancipatory intentions to its having become, variously, manipulative, populist, tokenistic, co-opted by power, reformist, absorbed by planning, absorbed by the market, and ethically hidden from judgement.³ I argue that these evaluations share a common claim, that participatory architecture, as it has been practised, lacks the means to critically understand and act upon the social and political situations in which it is engaged, and propose the realistic utopia as a conceptual tool that has the potential to navigate these perceived deficiencies.

² For example Doina Petrescu of *atelier d'architecture autogérée* has strong connections to the *Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative*, a group which can be credited with rigorously enacting a particular form of critical participatory practice. The work of Matrix has recently been attracting renewed disciplinary discussion, for example through the exhibition "How We Live Now: Reimagining Spaces with Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative," at the Barbican, London, 17 May 2021 - 30 Jan 2022.

³ While there is significant crossover in these analyses, each work is primarily used in this chapter to outline a specific argument: Manipulative: Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation"; Populist: Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, "In the Name of the People; The Populist Movement in Architecture." In *What People Want: Populism in Architecture and Design*, ed. Micheal Shamiyeh (Basel: Birkhauser, 2005), 289-305; Tokenistic: Jeremy Till, "The Negotiation of Hope" in *Architecture and Participation*, eds. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (Abingdon: Spon Press, 2005), 23-42; Coopted by power: Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation (Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality)*. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010); Reformist: Pier Vittorio Aureli, "The Theology of Tabula Rasa: Walter Benjamin and Architecture in the Age of Precarity." *Log*, 27 (2013): 111-127; Absorbed by planning: Hilde Heynen, "Intervention in the Relations of Production, or Sublimation of Contradictions? On Commitment Then and Now" in *New Commitment* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2003), 48-47; Absorbed by the market: Isabelle Doucet, *The Practice Turn in Architecture: Brussels after 1968*, (London: Routledge, 2016) and Jesko Fezer and Mathias Heyden. "Under Construction: Strategies of Participative Architecture and Spatial Appropriation" trans from the German by Elizabeth Felicella and Ines Schaber, in *What Remains of a Building Divided into Equal Parts and Distributed for Reconfiguration*, eds. Ken Ehrlich and Brendon LaBelle (Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2009); Tahl Kaminer,

Problems of Power 1: Climbing the Ladder

In 1969, Sherry Arnstein, a senior policy advisor for the US government, wrote a critical review of the practices of community participation.⁴ Just four years earlier, Paul Davidoff was putting the case for something resembling participation, but in Arnstein's article the need for participation is more or less assumed.⁵ Through the work of Davidoff and the broader advocacy planning movement, participation had already established a solid presence within the discourse and practices of urban planning and policy making in the US at the time, and their calls to channel federal funding to community groups' participation in urban renewal processes were being enacted. The article makes clear that, even in those early days, the practice of participation rarely matched the rhetoric. Arnstein catalogues the various ways in which participation was already being misappropriated and used to achieve results well below its aspirations for democratic city-making (Figure 5.1).



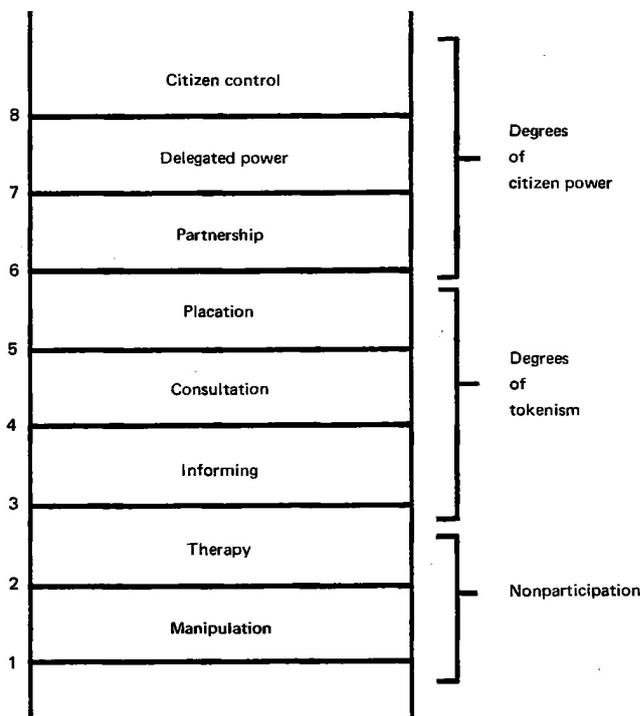
Figure 5.1. 'French Student Poster' For Arnstein, the poster 'highlights the fundamental point that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless'. Source: Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", 216.

Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation: The Reproduction of Post-Fordism in Late-Twentieth-Century Architecture (London: Routledge, 2011); Ethically hidden from judgement: Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*; Jones and Card, "Constructing 'Social Architecture'"

⁴ The text has remained a key articulation of some of participation's major problems and is frequently used to evaluate participatory practices in scholarly work to this day. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation."

⁵ Arnstein's article was originally published in the same journal as Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31, no. 4 (November 1965): 331-338. In the four years separating these two widely influential articles the discussion of participation matured significantly, coming to be discussed as an existing phenomenon rather than just a proposition. Davidoff's thesis and its relationship with De Carlo's theories are examined in Chapter 2.

The article is strongly influenced by the events of 1968 which, for Arnstein, revealed the ‘critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process’.⁶ This insight points to a wide spectrum of modes of participation. To elucidate these modes and their varying effects, Arnstein formulated her now-famous ‘ladder’, an incremental schema for evaluating the kinds of participation being enacted in US cities at the time in governmental poverty reduction programs.⁷ The ladder (Figure 5.2) classifies ‘typologies’ of participation, based on the level to which decision-making power is actually distributed. At the lowest rungs are processes of ‘nonparticipation’ which use a participatory format to engineer support (manipulation) or attempt to ‘cure’ the social pathology (therapy) of the participants.⁸ Above this are ‘degrees of tokenism’, which contain some elements of genuine participation, such as informing citizens of their rights or consulting them on their opinions, but lack the mechanisms to give them any meaningful role in decision making. At the top tier are ‘degrees of citizen power’, which begin to actually redistribute decision-making power to those affected. These range from ‘partnership’ models of give and take, to structures in which the citizens either hold ‘a clear majority of seats’ or there is total ‘citizen control’.⁹



⁶ Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” 216.

⁷ Arnstein focuses on ‘three federal social programs: urban renewal, anti-poverty and Model Cities’. Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” 216.

⁸ Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” 218-219.

⁹ Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” 222.

Figure 5.2. Arnstein's widely influential 'Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation'. Source: Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", 217.

Here, the objects around which participation is framed are brought into question. Arnstein's account of participation in decision making did not focus exclusively on physical planning, but examined participation in all the planning, policy and service decisions that affect the lives of urban 'have-nots'. She recounts a particular example of consultation to highlight the problem of restricting the lens of participation:

most of the women answered these questionnaires without knowing what their options were. They assumed that if they just asked for something small, they might get something useful in the neighbourhood. Had the mothers known that a free prepaid health insurance plan was a possible option, they might not have put tot-lots so high on their wish lists.¹⁰

Here she identifies the prescription of options at the outset as a key limitation of participation. For her, genuine participation would need to draw in a more complex array of objects, ranging from 'tot-lots' to health insurance. She is interested in extending the conversation beyond the immediate problem to begin to rework the broader economic and political frameworks in which interventions occur. Arnstein does not explore the question of how such a diversity of options and objects can be brought into the discussion, nor who should be tasked with this job.

While Davidoff's earlier article revolved around the role and activity of the advocate planner, Arnstein does not describe any particular idea of the planner, but focusses on process and the broader relational structure of participation. The key criterion that determines the location of a process on her ladder is the extent to which decision-making power is redistributed. Arnstein acknowledges the simplistic nature of the ladder, which casts the powerful and powerless as monolithic blocs, in contrast to the much more complex reality of the situations in which these processes were being enacted. Nevertheless, she retains it because it reflects the perceptions of those involved.¹¹ The ladder moves between degrees of influence by the 'people' at one end and the 'power-structure' at the other. In the discussions of participation examined below, a similar concept remains in play. These discussions open

¹⁰ Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," 219.

¹¹ "The ladder juxtaposes powerless citizens with the powerful in order to highlight the fundamental divisions between them. In actuality neither the have-nots nor the powerholders are homogenous blocs. Each group encompasses a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups. The justification for using such simplistic abstractions is that in most cases the have-nots really do perceive the powerful as a monolithic "system," and the powerholders actually do view the have-nots as a sea of "those people," with little comprehension of the class and caste differences among them'. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," 217.

up the question left unexplored by Arnstein of who should expand the field of available options by locating the figure of the planner or architect as an actor with his or her own agenda within this scheme.

This introduction of the architect into a relational context between the powerful and the powerless becomes the focus of discussion of participation in architecture over the coming decades. The specific case of architecture presents new kinds of problems for participation. While Arnstein's ladder proposes a relatively straightforward gradient of participation in terms of decision-making control between the powerful and the powerless, an exploration of the role of the architect requires attention to relationships moving in three directions at once: between the power-structure and the people, between the power-structure and the architect, and between the architect and the people. The diagrams presented in this chapter illustrate how the different perspectives challenge, augment or seek to replace this model of the relationships at play and the means by which to rearrange them.

Problems of Desire: What Do You *Really* Want?

In 1972, two years after De Carlo's 'Il Pubblico' and Arnstein's 'Ladder', architects Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre began to define a tendency within architecture that had developed through the 1960s which they termed 'populism'.¹² Their article, written as a review of these tendencies, does not address the large-scale experiments in participation by De Carlo and others which were underway in the early seventies.¹³ Its focus, rather, is on two streams which strongly influenced these experiments: the pop/vernacular embrace of everyday architecture on one side and the user-advocacy and self-build movements on the other. The text is fundamentally concerned with mapping the relational scheme described above, seeking to position the architect in relation to both 'the people' and the 'powers that be'. Their work is important because it represents one of the first attempts to critically examine the underlying assumptions of architects as they began to operate in the context of participation.

In their analysis, Tzonis and Lefaivre draw on a diverse range of architectural work, including Robert Venturi's and Denise Scott Brown's analysis of the strip in Las Vegas and John Turner's interest in the

¹² Tzonis and Lefaivre, "In the Name of the People ." A first version of this paper was written during a stay in the Institut d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme of Strasbourg in 1972 and was published in *Bauwelt* (German) January ii, 1975 at the invitation of Lucius Burkhardt and in *Forum* (Dutch) No 3, February 1976.

¹³ Writing again in 1997, Tzonis and Lefaivre revisit the theme of Populism in Europe as explicitly enacted through the 1970s work of De Carlo, Ralph Erskine and Lucien Kroll. Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Architecture in Europe since 1968: Memory and Invention* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997), 10-11.

barriadas of Lima. They position this notion of populist architecture in opposition to the operations of the 'Welfare State architects', who were universally condemned for their oppressive regulation of norms and processes. Tzonis and Lefaivre are primarily troubled by the rather simplistic reading of the operation of power in society which they observe in the work of the populists. They critique the populists' easy acceptance of vernacular forms or expressed desires as true class expressions, suggesting that these 'preferences' are historically constructed. This is problematic within the seemingly open process of participation:

The model of design as an autonomous political process assuring the 'liberation' of the user through a direct participation in the design process, rests on the idea of the design product as a source of social power and on the hypothesis that values are autonomous from the overall development of the social organisation.¹⁴

For Tzonis and Lefaivre, these expressions are in reality 'the outcome of the relationships of dependence of this group to the other groups'.¹⁵ Figures 5.3 and 5.4 illustrate the lack of autonomy being described by Tzonis and Lefaivre. In their schema, the dominant mechanisms of power continue unchecked despite the most earnest process of user participation because the fundamental economic relationships remain untouched. By leaving the source of the vernacular forms and expressed desires un-interrogated and the broader economic framework un-critiqued, the populist architect is unable to change anything of consequence, and structures of oppression remain untouched.

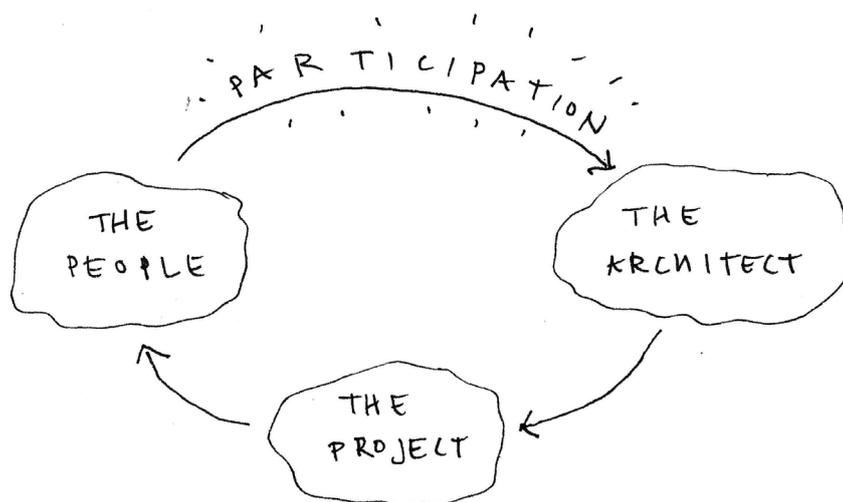


Figure 5.3. The simplistic understanding of participation, removed from societal power relations, as described by Tzonis and Lefaivre.

¹⁴ Tzonis and Lefaivre, "In the Name of the People," 302.

¹⁵ Tzonis and Lefaivre, "In the Name of the People," 301.

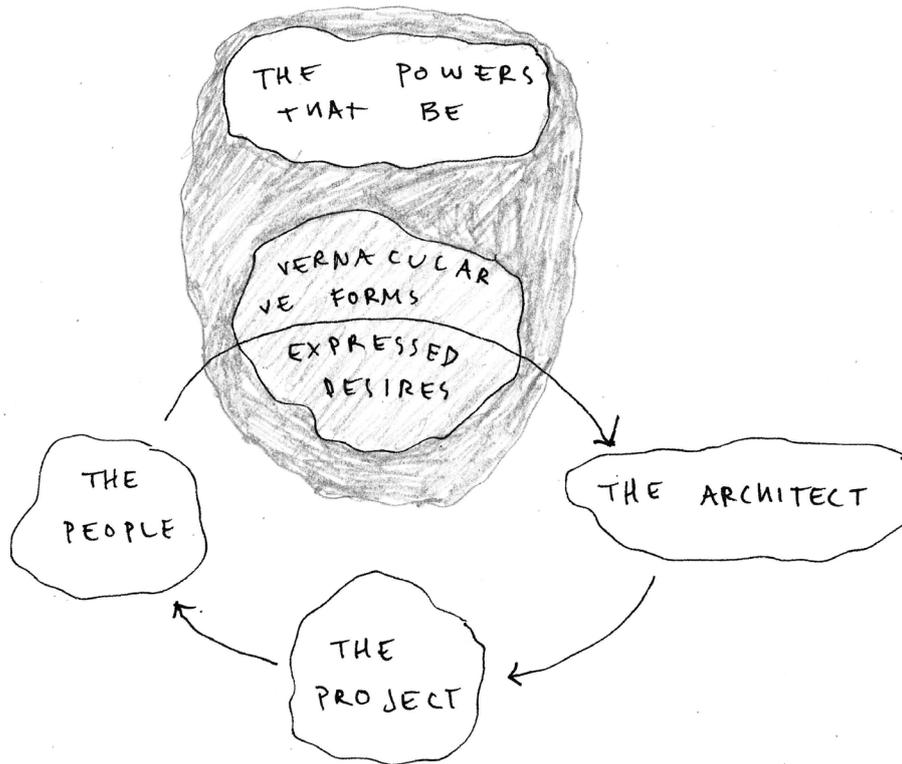


Figure 5.4. Tzonis and Lefaivre's critique of participation's blind acceptance of historically constructed forms and desires as authentic class expressions. The shaded section indicates the unseen influence of power they identify.

There is anxiety here about the erosion of the role of the architect and of society in general. While they credit the populist with a useful critique of the Welfare State architects' 'arbitrary, authoritarian and wasteful regimentation of objects and people', they criticise them for reducing 'the prospects in our society for architectural policies beneficial for the general interest'.¹⁶ The authors' main point is that architects need to critically interrogate what people say they want, and what people build (as vernacular or pop architecture). The implication is that neither is what they *really* want.¹⁷ This position highlights a key tension regarding the paternalism of participation. If the people do not know what they want, who does, is it the architect?¹⁸ While Tzonis' and Lefaivre's critique sought to draw attention to the operations of power and influence far beyond the interaction between the architect and user, it would be the relationship between these two actors that dominated discourse on participation in the years to come.

¹⁶ Tzonis and Lefaivre, "In the Name of the People," 305.

¹⁷ This position is very close to those adopted at the time by architects engaged in large-scale projects of participation, including De Carlo and Álvaro Siza, both of which are discussed in Chapter 4.

¹⁸ Some revealing responses to this question can be found in Martien de Vletter's interviews with architects involved in the participatory housing and neighbourhood design projects that were widespread in Holland through the 1970s. For example, 'As an architect you simply had to learn to take everyone for a ride' – Carel Weeber, quoted in Martien de Vletter, *The Critical Seventies: Architecture and Urban Planning in The Netherlands 1968-1982* (Rotterdam: NAI, 2004), 100.

Problems of Power 2: Lost in the Details

Over time, as practices of participation became more widespread, the discourse on participatory architecture shifted in focus. In the early 1970s, as illustrated above, the primary discourse was concerned with the relational setup between ‘the people’ and the ‘power structure’ as mediated and navigated by the architect. By the late 1980s, the discourse had come to focus much more intensively on the specific power dynamics at play between ‘the people’ and ‘the architect’. A potent example of this is the 1987 publication *Community Architecture: How People Are Creating Their Own Environment* by Nick Wates and Charles Knevitt, which outlines the particular place of participatory architecture in Britain at that time.¹⁹ They defined community architecture as ‘both an *activity* rooted in rediscovered natural laws and a broad political *movement* cutting across traditional boundaries ... based on the simple principle that the environment works better if the people who live, work and play in it are actively involved in its creation and management instead of being treated as passive consumers’.²⁰ At the time of writing, this ‘movement’ had become firmly entrenched in the architectural establishment in Britain, with the patronage of Prince Charles and the elevation of its ‘most able politician and propagandist’, Rod Hackney, to the position of president of the Royal Institute of British Architects.²¹

The authors’ main arguments for participation are pragmatic, rather than political. They present community architecture as an approach to make the built environment ‘work better’:

It is likely to be of higher quality physically, will be better suited to its purpose, will be better maintained and will make better use of resources - finance, land, materials, and people's initiative and enterprise. Also, the process of involvement, combined with the better end product, can create employment, can help reduce crime, vandalism, mental stress, ill health and the potential for urban unrest, and can lead to more stable and self-sufficient communities, and to more contented and confident citizens and professionals.²²

¹⁹ Nick Wates and Charles Knevitt, *Community Architecture: How People Are Creating Their Own Environment* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013). First published as Nick Wates and Charles Knevitt, *Community Architecture: How People Are Creating Their Own Environment* (Penguin, 1987).

²⁰ Wates and Knevitt, *Community Architecture*, 13.

²¹ Wates and Knevitt, *Community Architecture*, 19. For a sense of how things had changed, see Rayner Banham, “Alternative networks for the alternative culture?” *Design Participation*, ed. Nigel Cross (London: Academy Editions, 1972), 15. Where participation was sardonically described as ‘the new wonder ingredient’ that all the ‘radicals’ and ‘Maoists’ were into.

²² Wates and Knevitt, *Community Architecture*, 20.

Wates and Knevitt describe a process based on ‘radical change in the relationships between those involved in development’.²³ To accomplish this, they consciously seek to de-politicise participation. For them, ‘dogmatic attitudes’ had ‘prevented any resolution of the central problem of people's alienation from their environment in recent years’.²⁴ Whereas for some of the authors discussed above participation should be directed towards enabling a much broader critical reflection on the economic and political structures that frame each project, for Wates and Knevitt the goal is much more clearly targeted at the design process rather than structural features such as budget:

Contrary to popular belief, the magic solution is not simply vast quantities of public money. Although more investment in the built environment is desperately needed, the crucial task is to improve the way resources are used. The key is to get the process of development right: to ensure that the right decisions are made by the right people at the right time.²⁵

The problems and solutions outlined in the book revolve around the relationship and power dynamics between the ‘expert’ and the ‘user’. The powerful actors who commission architecture are only asked to change their ‘thinking’ and ensure ‘that resources are channelled more effectively and put at the disposal of residents and local communities’.²⁶ The mechanics of achieving this change are left unexamined. The conceptualisation of participation in community architecture shows a clear shift in focus whereby the relationship between the people and the architect becomes the fundamental object in question while the relationship with the commissioning powers remains largely unquestioned.²⁷

Writing around the same time from the North American context, architectural scholar Johann Albrecht argued that participation had degenerated from the practice pioneered by De Carlo, Ralph Erskine and Lucien Kroll to become primarily a polemic tool to ‘legitimize architectural populism without acknowledging its initial social program’.²⁸ The main issue for Albrecht was the gulf in understanding between the architect and the potential user, given their widely contrasting value sets and modes of expression, which he framed as differing ‘taste cultures’. For Albrecht, the danger in this gulf is that participation would perpetuate a model of arbitrary compromise. He draws on theories emerging within

²³ Wates and Knevitt, *Community Architecture*, 21.

²⁴ Wates and Knevitt, *Community Architecture*, 21.

²⁵ Wates and Knevitt, *Community Architecture*, 18.

²⁶ Wates and Knevitt, *Community Architecture*, 21.

²⁷ De Carlo critiques the British Community Architecture movement as focusing solely on the ‘qualities’ of architecture which: ‘replaces the search for suitable solutions with the passive adoption of obsolete models, whose only merit is that of belonging to the most banal iconography.’ Giancarlo De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture* (London: The Thomas Cubitt Trust, 1978): 14.

²⁸ Johann Albrecht, “Towards a Theory of Participation in Architecture: An Examination of Humanistic Planning Theories,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 42, No. 1 (1988): 24.

humanistic planning to suggest that active and intentional consensus building would address this issue, but only if it were undertaken in an environment of mutual learning in which the knowledge of both the architect and user are valued. Albrecht's narrow framing of the problems around the relations between user and architect, similar to the approach adopted by Wates and Knevt, represents a substantial departure from the more critical mode of participation outlined by De Carlo. Whereas De Carlo had consistently focused on the 'why' of a project, these projects of the late 1980s were concerned primarily with the 'how' of participation.

The primacy of the practical over the critical is also evident in the writings of Henry Sanoff, a pioneer of participation who established the Community Development Group in North Carolina in 1969. Writing in 2000, drawing on his long and rich career working in America, Japan and Australia, Sanoff credits the Chicago community organiser Saul Alinsky (1909-1972) as a key inspiration.²⁹ He distinguishes between Alinsky's conflictual model of participation, whereby power must be taken via well-targeted protest, and the consensus-building model which he himself favoured. He goes on to describe how this more pragmatic approach, which 'no longer views participation as defined by Arnstein's 1969 categorical term for "citizen power"' was now the established model.³⁰ The goals of participation by the year 2000 had, in Sanoff's view, 'been more modestly defined', with a primary purpose now being the resolution of conflict. For Sanoff: 'Conceptualizing the issue means asking simple questions: Who, what, where, how and when?'.³¹ Noticeably absent again is the question of 'why'.

Jeremy Till highlights this ongoing lack of critical reflection on the question of 'why' in his 1998 critical reading of the model of participation described by Wates and Knevt.³² His central argument is that, by setting itself in opposition to the social ills perpetuated by 'conventional' architecture, community architecture has built up its own set of myths. He questions the simplistic identification of conventional architecture as the source of various ills, arguing that architecture has always been contingent and has never been able to wield the despotic power attributed to it. One of the core myths on which community architecture relies is that of community itself as the source of its validation. For Till, following Richard Sennett, communities simply do not exist as pure and unified wholes, free from internal conflicts, but are much more complex. Till problematises the notion of community as a 'mythical middle ground', a level at which it is supposedly possible to negotiate between the by then

²⁹ Henry Sanoff, *Community Participation Methods in Design and Planning* (New York: John Wiley, 2000), 2-3.

³⁰ Sanoff, *Community Participation*, 8.

³¹ Sanoff, *Community Participation*, 9.

³² Jeremy Till, "Architecture of the Impure Community," in *Occupying Architecture* ed. Jonathan Hill (New York: Routledge, 1998): 62-75.

much criticised welfare state and the emerging hyper-individualism of the Reagan-Thatcher years. Directing attention exclusively towards an entity which has little real authority and whose existence is questionable reduces people's capacity to act politically. Through the fantasy of mutualism, the underlying political, economic and social structures remain unquestioned.

For Till, the effects of this depoliticisation become clear when one examines another central myth of community architecture, that of empowerment of the user. The logic was that, since architects had previously wielded power irresponsibly, imposing their will on others, this power should be devolved and given back to the people who actually use the places being designed. Despite the convincing premise, this logic produces problematic results. Till follows Gillian Rose in questioning the usefulness of the community architect's voluntary submission. As Rose writes: 'it is the architect who is demoted: the people do not accede to power'.³³ This leads us to question more closely the dynamics of power at work. The architect's authority to act is mainly delegated from their financial client and is, thus, only borrowed power. The only autonomous power of architects is the power of their expertise, their knowledge. It is precisely this power which, Till and Rose argue, the architect has disavowed. Participation had emerged in part as a critique of architecture's authoritarian tendencies, yet the end result of this internalised critique was a diminished role for the architect as a mere facilitator. Till deploys Michel Foucault's reading of power to challenge the pervasive notion that power is either all good or all bad; rather, it can be regarded as a 'productive network which runs through the whole social body'.³⁴ Figure 5.5 illustrates Till's distinctive reading, which re-introduces the broader network of power relations into our picture of participation.

³³ Gillian Rose, "Athens and Jerusalem: A Tale of Three Cities," *Social Legal Studies* 3, no. 3 (1994): 336.

³⁴ Till, "Architecture of the impure Community," 72. Till is here quoting Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge, Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

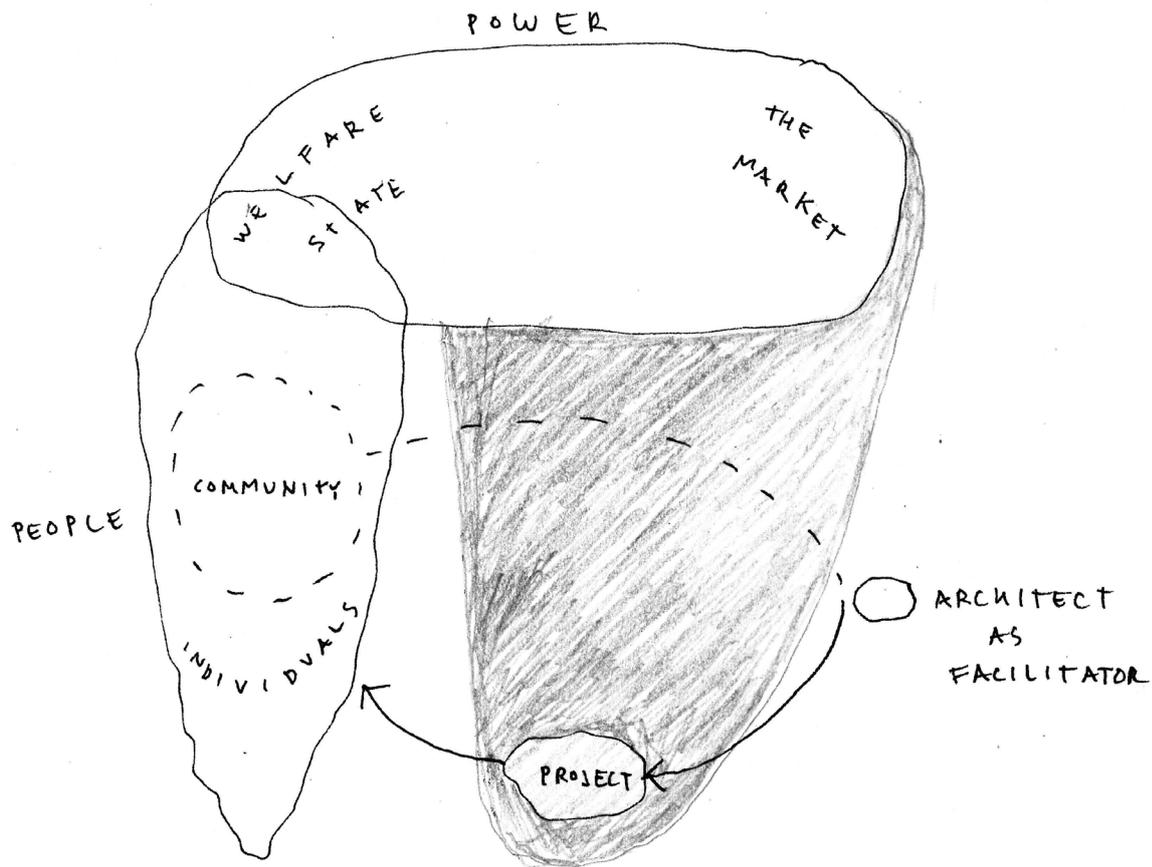


Figure 5.5. Representation of Till's argument that by mythologising pure, coherent communities on one hand and jettisoning the architect's power of expertise on the other, both parties are weakened. This perspective maintains the model whereby the existing powers maintain true control over a given project.

Till identifies the major encumbrance as originating not in problems within either 'conventional' or 'community' architecture but in the false dichotomy between the two, as each endlessly reflects the other but remains preoccupied with itself and ignores the world outside. He urges both sides to 'twist the mirrors, to see these architectures partly reflecting themselves, but to see those visions disturbed and invigorated by the structures outside, and in particular political structures'.³⁵ Till argues that a true community architecture should occupy what Rose has called 'the broken middle', a site 'in which both architects and users relinquish the impossible purity of their communities and open up to a critical engagement with the forces beyond'.³⁶ Participatory architecture must accept the conflictual situations within which it is acting and acknowledge that both the user and the architect need to be engaged in a critical dialogue where neither is subordinated and both are able to learn. Significantly, he calls for the return to a mode of criticality within participation. He highlights what he characterises as false wars

³⁵ Till, "Architecture of the Impure Community," 74.

³⁶ Till, "Architecture of the Impure Community," 75.

between architect and users and amongst architects, and points instead to engagement with ‘the forces beyond’—the political, financial, social and ecological structures which frame any architectural project. As is discussed below, these domains had all changed significantly since De Carlo first formulated his notion of participation.

Problems of Freedom: Neoliberalism Eats Participation

Towards the end of the 20th century, the social question of architecture seemed more or less settled. Participation was a useful, albeit unexciting technique for ameliorating the worst excesses of architecture, usually at the lowest level of low-budget architecture, by local governments, neighbourhood committees and social housing providers. Architectural culture was, for the most part, focussed on high-level, high-budget works such as museums, airports and villas. As Tahl Kaminer has argued, the architects who had launched their careers with speculative and formal experimentations, excised of seemingly naïve ambitions for social change, had by this time progressed to the pinnacle of the profession, resurrecting architecture’s image as a creator of value, identity and dynamic form.³⁷ Yet, around the turn of the millennium, participation once again began to attract significant interest within architectural discourse.³⁸ Under the label of a new ‘social turn’ in architecture, a diverse set of practices featured in numerous exhibitions and publications.³⁹

While geographically and methodologically varied, these practices typically sought to make concrete improvements within localised social conditions. Regularly featured examples included: the student-built, low-income housing projects of Rural Studio in Alabama; the partially self-built housing schemes of Elemental in Chile; the trans-border speculative housing projects of Estudio Teddy Cruz in San Diego/Tijuana; the resident-led urban activism of Park Fiction in Hamburg; the incremental and transitional urban improvements of *atelier d’architecture autogérée* (aaa – studio for self-managed

³⁷ Tahl Kaminer, *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation: The Reproduction of Post-Fordism in Late-Twentieth-Century Architecture* (Routledge, 2011).

³⁸ While it is beyond the scope of the present discussion to speculate as to the precise historical factors which led to this resurgent interest, a number could be seen as influential. These include: exhaustion with the antics of high-profile architects; nostalgia for the radicalism of the 60s and 70s; the influence of user-defined technology associated with the internet; the rediscovery of informal settlements as they approached one-sixth of the world’s population; and movements such as relational aesthetics in the visual arts.

³⁹ The diversity of approaches can be seen in the ‘catalogue’ or ‘compilation’ exhibitions and publications which were the first to engage with these emerging practices. See for example: Cameron Sinclair and Kate Stohr, *Design Like You Give a Damn: Architectural Responses to Humanitarian Crises* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006); Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou, *Urban/Act: A Handbook for Alternative Practice* (Paris: PREPAV, 2007); Andres Lepik, *Small Scale, Big Change: New Architectures of Social Engagement* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010); Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, and Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011); Giovanna Borasi and Mirko Zardini, *Actions: What You Can Do with the City* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2008).

architecture) in Paris; the ‘urban acupuncture’ of Caracas Urban Think Tank (UTT) in Venezuela; the participatory urban research of the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) in New York; and the parasitic homeless shelters of artist Michael Rakowitz in Cambridge and Vienna.⁴⁰ In different ways, participation was involved or implied in all of these practices, in which previously marginalised groups played a key role as active clients (Rural Studio, Rakowitz, Cruz, Caracas UTT), self-builders (Elemental, aaa), or researchers (CUP, Park Fiction).

Tzonis and Lefaivre had previously noted how closely participation as a strategy was tied to the social, political and economic model of the welfare state.⁴¹ Participation emerged as a critical counterpart and alternative formulation of the model of centralised provision of housing. Yet, while participation critiqued the welfare state model with the intention of reforming it, larger economic and political pressures led to its replacement by deregulatory, free-market models. Participation had relied on the welfare state not only as a project to reform, but as the very economic infrastructure that enabled projects of participation to take place. Accordingly, as the state systems that provided housing began to be dismantled, participation lost both its polemical reason for existence and its principal site for intervention.⁴² Already in the 1970s, Tzonis and Lefaivre had been troubled by the easy slide of critical participation into uncritical consumerism: ‘Freedom of choice in matters of consumption does not guarantee the independence of a group, and the movement of the user-oriented design offered nothing but an illusory freedom’.⁴³ Populism more broadly had replaced the regimental delivery of the welfare state with the free choice model of the ‘well serviced supermarket’.⁴⁴ Populism exposed and ‘managed to foil the authoritarian, arbitrary and wasteful’ tendencies of the welfare state but ‘offer[ed] nothing in their place but freedom in a design supermarket and an increasingly fragmented and privatised world’.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ For Rural Studio see Sinclair and Stohr, *Design Like You Give a Damn*, 146-149; Lepik, *Small Scale, Big Change*, 73-82. For Elemental see Sinclair and Stohr, *Design Like You Give a Damn*, 164-167; Lepik, *Small Scale, Big Change*, 83-92. For Estudio Teddy Cruz see Lepik, *Small Scale, Big Change*, 93-102. For Park Fiction see Awan et al, *Spatial Agency*, 181-182. For aaa see Borasi and Zardini, *Actions*, 104-105, Awan et al, *Spatial Agency*, 105-106. For Caracas Urban Think Tank see Lepik, *Small Scale, Big Change*, 123-132. For CUP see Sinclair and Stohr, *Design Like You Give a Damn*, 318-319. For Michael Rakowitz see Sinclair and Stohr, *Design Like You Give a Damn*, 190-193, Borasi and Zardini, *Actions*, 132-133.

⁴¹ Tzonis and Lefaivre, *Architecture in Europe since 1968*, 10-11.

⁴² Tzonis and Lefaivre, *Architecture in Europe since 1968*. Tzonis and Lefaivre are careful to note that, while the critiques levelled against the welfare state (of which participation and populism were part) contributed to its dissipation, they were more strongly driven by deteriorating economic conditions.

⁴³ Tzonis and Lefaivre, “In the Name of the People,” 301.

⁴⁴ Tzonis and Lefaivre, “In the Name of the People,” 301.

⁴⁵ Tzonis and Lefaivre, “In the Name of the People,” 305.

The correspondence of historic participatory practices and neoliberal ideologies has for some time been under discussion in disciplinary discourse.⁴⁶ Recently, Tahl Kaminer has noted the continued use of an anti-welfare-state critique in contemporary practices of participation.⁴⁷ Given the profound shifts that have taken place in the intervening decades, Kaminer sees a real contradiction in pursuing a critique of something that no longer exists. As an example, he references a masterclass at the Berlage in 2009 at which the Guatemalan American architect Teddy Cruz proposed a series of actions based on de-regulation and liberalisation of a small market. At the time, Cruz was gaining an international reputation for his practice, which drew together the complex geopolitical forces at work on the border between Mexico and the USA through architectural projects. One of these, a housing project designed in collaboration with community organisation *Casa Familiar* in the San Diego Border neighbourhood of San Ysidro called *Living Rooms on the Border*, attracted wide publicity. Cruz was interested in the appropriation of the suburban landscape by successive waves of immigrants: unofficial house extensions had densified the area and brought life to back alleys, while informal garage industries and businesses had created livelier, mixed-use streets. Drawing on these phenomena, Cruz and Casa Familiar devised a housing proposal which used the ‘tactics’ of informal urbanism to challenge restrictive planning regulation.⁴⁸ For Kaminer, Cruz’s rhetoric at the Berlage mistakenly identified the existing tight regulation as a tactic of neoliberalism, rather than a small remainder of state control.

A closer look at one of Cruz’s projects, *Manufactured Sites*, provides insight into the dilemmas faced by practices concerned with participation under neoliberalism, by attempting to engage with the uneven flows of global trade.⁴⁹ Cruz had previously researched the processes of invasion, settlement and land acquisition involved in the establishment and development of informal settlements in Tijuana. He was particularly interested in tracing the ways in which used materials (ranging from tires, pallets and garage doors to entire houses) were brought from the USA to Mexico for reuse. Through a speculative proposition, *Manufactured Sites*, Cruz linked these dynamics with a very different kind of border crosser, the *maquiladora*—manual assembly plants of multinational companies such as Sony, Hyundai and Walmart, which had moved their operations across the border to take advantage of the low wages and

⁴⁶ See for example Benjamin Franks, “New Right/New Left,” *Non-plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*, eds Jonathan Hughes and Simon Sadler (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000), 32-43.

⁴⁷ Tahl Kaminer, “The Contradictions of Participatory Architecture and Empire,” *Architecture Research Quarterly* 18, no.1 (2014): 32.

⁴⁸ This project, while ostensibly ‘real’ and documented for approval, was never enacted beyond the stage of basic documentation. It was however widely exhibited. See for example, Teddy Cruz, “Levittown Retrofitted” in *Visionary Power: Producing the Contemporary City*, eds. Christine de Baan, Joachim Declerck, Véronique Patteeuw (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2007), 209-217.

⁴⁹ Teddy Cruz, “Tijuana Case Study. Tactics of Invasion: Manufactured Sites,” *Architectural Design* 75, no. 5 (2005): 32-37. In 2007 I spent a month in Cruz’s office as part of a travelling research scholarship, exploring ways in which the project could be realised with a real community on a real site. This exercise was documented in: Hugo Moline, *Informalism: Working with and Learning from Communities in Marginalised Settlements*.
https://www.architects.nsw.gov.au/download/BHTS/Informalism_Hugo_Moline.pdf, 90-94.

lax labour laws in Mexico while maintaining proximity to their customers in the USA. The project sought to bring these two processes together, despite the difference in the scale of their operations. A large proportion of the *maquiladora* workforce were themselves landless participants in the establishment and development of the informal settlements. The relationship between the *maquiladoras* and the communities who worked for them was the focus of the *Manufactured Sites* project. Among the *maquiladoras*, Cruz identified Mecalux, a manufacturer of modular industrial shelving. Using their components, Cruz designed a structural system which, he proposed, could be donated by the *maquiladora* to its workers. In this way, structural soundness would be ensured, while all decisions about spatial configuration and cladding would be left to the occupant/builder. In Cruz's terms, the Mecalux system, reconfigured as a standardised infrastructure, became a 'manufactured site' around which an improvised dwelling could be built (Figure 5.6).



Figure 5.6. The product of the exploiter as a resource for the exploited. Teddy Cruz, "Tijuana Case Study. Tactics of Invasion: Manufactured Sites," *Architectural Design* 75, no. 5 (2005):33-34.

The resulting project can be read in multiple ways. On one level it is a critique, highlighting the injustices of the situation by tying the parties together into a new and optimistic relationship. On another level it could be read as an attempt to resolve this contradiction and conflict. In some ways the project is a ready-made PR solution for Mecalux, a beautifully-honed case study in corporate social responsibility. It is this aspect of the project which has troubled some of Cruz's contemporaries. The critical Dutch architecture group BAVO has labelled this type of project 'NGO art': and claimed that by providing small interventions in everyday life, it moves away from deep criticism and acts in close cooperation with market players.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ BAVO, as quoted in Mick Wilson, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Critical Challenges to "New Urban Practices," in *Planning Unplanned: Toward a New Function of Art in Society*, eds. Barbara Holub and Christine Hohenbüchler (Vienna: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2015). 166.

In their comprehensive research on participation, *'Hier Entsteht'* (Under Construction), Berlin architects Jesko Fezer and Matthias Heyden articulate the need for past formulations of the practice to be updated.⁵¹ As Fezer and Heyden argue, the conditions of a market-dominated society required entirely new practices of participation, rather than a simple update of those formulated from the 1960s to the 1980s.⁵² In their analysis, techniques of participation were always bound to social relations. Models for incorporating inhabitants into architectural processes emerged as the Fordist logic of labour and lifestyle reached its limits.⁵³ This led to the formation of new models of production that integrated the employee into more dynamic hierarchies. In this way, participation had become a governing principle in line with privatisation and increased self-government. While this had had an emancipatory character in the 1960s, now mandatory regimes of flexibility corresponded to neoliberal ideologies, being seen as economically superior, more targeted and efficient. The architectural historian and theorist Isabelle Doucet, in her study of participatory practices in Brussels, identifies the dilemma this shift created for participatory practice:⁵⁴ Whilst in the state-versus-the-people model, citizens had challenged the dominance of the all-encompassing state planner they were now up against the exclusions and entrepreneurialism of market liberalism.⁵⁵

This sets up a fundamental problem for participatory practices seeking to operate today. As has been noted by Tahl Kaminer and Maroš Krivý, the egalitarian impulses of participation have typically been more easily discarded than its pluralist ones.⁵⁶ This is evident in the close relationship to the political shift from state control to market control of the domains in which participation was intended to intervene, chiefly housing, but also 'the city' as a planned and designed entity. As can be observed in diagrams depicting the relationships between 'people' and 'power' (Figures 5.4– 5.6), participation operates in the space where the two fields overlap (Figure 5.7). As the provision of housing and the planning of the collective environment more generally shifted away from centralised governmental

⁵¹ Fezer and Heyden. "Under Construction," 10-27. The text is taken from the introduction to the German publication *Hier entsteht: Strategien partizipativer Architektur und räumlicher Aneignung* (bbooks, Berlin, 2004 & 2007), which evolved from an event of the same name held in Berlin in 2003. Fezer was a member of the group *An Architektur*, an important contributor to the resurgent interest in participation in architectural culture in the early 2000s. Heyden collaborated with *An Architektur* on a series of publications tracking the United States 'Community Design' movement from 1960 to the present.

⁵² Fezer and Heyden, "Under Construction," 21.

⁵³ For more on these issues see Kenny Cupers, ed., *Use Matters: An Alternative History of Architecture*. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁵⁴ Isabelle Doucet, *The Practice Turn in Architecture: Brussels after 1968* (London: Routledge, 2016). Doucet's key engagement is with the 'Counter-projects' of Maurice Culot and Leon Krier, which are of particular interest in terms of the use of images in a participatory project.

⁵⁵ Doucet, *The Practice Turn in Architecture*, 114. The section from which this quote is taken discusses contemporary practices of participation in Brussels.

⁵⁶ Maroš Krivý and Tahl Kaminer, "Introduction: The Participatory Turn in Urbanism," *Footprint* 7(2) (2013): 1-6.

control, it become much more difficult to locate sites for participation, framed as a collective, direct democratic process, to intervene (Figure 5.8).

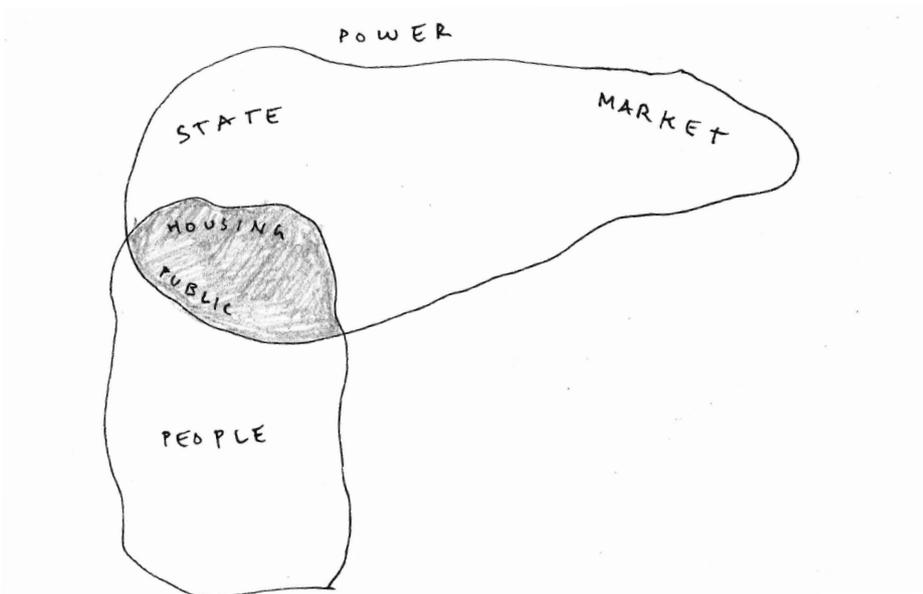


Figure 5.7. Participation has a clear point for intervention in a strong welfare state that manages the provision of housing and public space to its citizens. See Tzonis and Lefaivre, “In the Name of the People”.

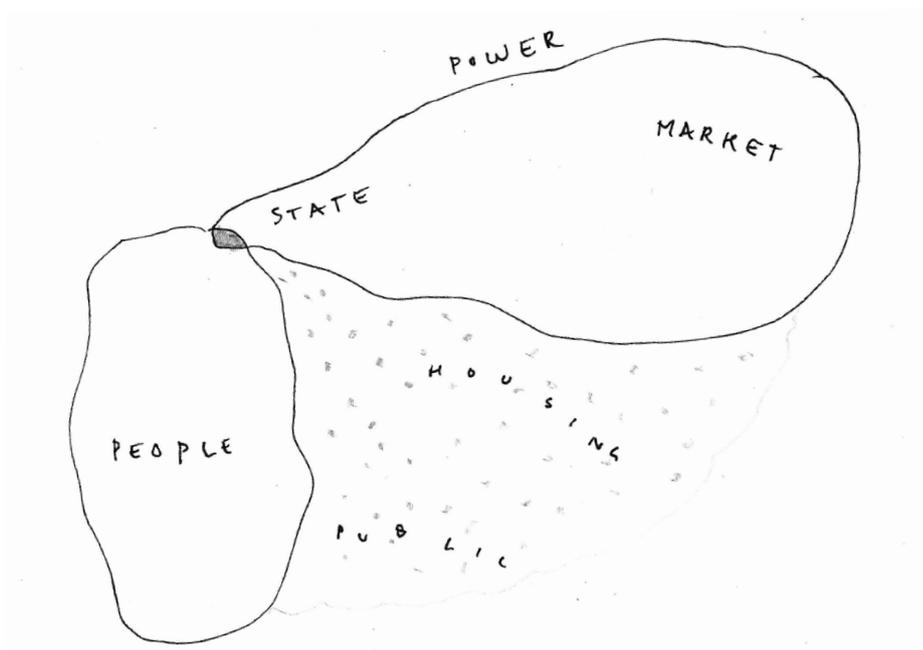


Figure 5.8. Within a neoliberal economy, where housing and public space are predominantly provided through individual interactions in the market, effective points of intervention for participation in architecture are difficult to locate. See Kaminer, “The Contradictions of Participatory Architecture and Empire”; Fezer and Heyden “Under Construction”; Doucet, *The Practice Turn in Architecture*.

Problems of Power 3: Scaling Up and Selling Out

This question of how practices of architecture can respond to neo-liberalism has been widely considered.⁵⁷ The problem of co-optation of users through participation, identified by Arnstein in the context of participation in governmental frameworks, is exacerbated in the decentralised power structures of neoliberalism. The emergence of ‘new’ practices of participation of the kind described by Kaminer corresponded with the global financial crisis of 2008. This has come to be seen as a kind of ‘austerity urbanism’, in which temporary use and the entrepreneurial model of the self-initiated project are celebrated.⁵⁸ Analysis of temporary, ‘interim-use’ projects developed with community participation (and, often, labour) has shown that they often produce quite different effects from those intended.⁵⁹

One practice which uses a participatory methodology in self-initiated projects of transient use is *atelier d'architecture autogérée* (aaa - studio for self-managed architecture). Established by Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou in 2001, it has since operated through a number of interlinked projects in the northern suburbs of Paris using vacant land to establish new community uses. Their first project ECObox, situated on a vacant piece of land was developed incrementally through the participation of nearby residents (Figure. 5.9). Participation for aaa is linked to the notion of desire. ECObox was initiated through collecting a range of desires through conversations with residents and other possible users, which became sketched out as the palette garden. Over time, these desires multiplied and changed and the group added infrastructure such as a mobile kitchen.⁶⁰ The mobility of the gardens and other elements was linked to the precarious nature of land tenure which underlies each of their projects. Existing on land which is in one way or another ‘in-between’ or borrowed, the projects have frequently had to shift location, often multiple times. When the original vacant land was taken back by the owners, a new site was found and the project continued.

⁵⁷ See Ana Jeinić and Anselm Wagner eds., *Is There (Anti-)Neoliberal Architecture?*, (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2013).

⁵⁸ See Fran Tonkiss, “Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City” *City*, 17, no. 3 (2013): 312-324. Also Pier Vittorio Aureli, “The Theology Of Tabula Rasa: Walter Benjamin And Architecture in The Age of Precarity,” *Log* 27 (2013): 111-127.

⁵⁹ Debates around this topic are addressed in John Henneberry, ed., *Transience and Permanence in Urban Development* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2017).

⁶⁰ Doina Petrescu, “Losing Control, Keeping Desire,” in *Architecture and Participation*, ed. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, and Jeremy Till (London: Spon Press, 2005): 42-71.



Figure 5.9. A composite image of the palette gardens and mobile furniture of the ECObox project. Image by aaa. Source: <http://www.urbantactics.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/webpanorama2-ecobox.jpg> accessed 24.06.2021

Fran Tonkiss has discussed in detail how aaa's project later project 'Passage 56', despite its exemplary process of genuine participation, still raises difficult questions about its place in larger cycles of urban development.⁶¹ She has highlighted the fact that such tactics of reclamation serve as powerful contributors to forces of gentrification and revaluation of land. As such, they are now implemented equally by real estate developers and by experimental spatial practitioners. In addition, the extensive and adaptable range of community services offered through the projects enables the ongoing disappearance of publicly funded services. Here the architects and their participants can be disparaged as having engaged in a deluded act of self-exploitation, with the result that their services have disappeared and they can longer afford the rent. While Tonkiss goes on to add significant nuance to these bold critiques, she maintains that any such practice walks a very fine line.⁶²

In a more general discussion of 'social' architecture, Anna Richter, Hanna Katharina Göbel and Monika Grubbauer have highlighted an underlying issue in projects such as those by aaa, as well as in their critiques, namely, the lack of regard for the larger forces acting on the situation. These issues are cordoned off as outside the scope, despite the projects' claims to have far-reaching impacts. For the authors, any such moments of social architecture and urbanism are utterly dwarfed by the enormous volume of what they term anti-social urbanism, to which they had been posited as alternatives.⁶³ For

⁶¹ Tonkiss, "Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City," 317. 'Passage 56' is also called 'Urban Interstice.'

⁶² Tonkiss, "Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City," 317-318.

⁶³ Anna Richter, Hanna Katharina Göbel and Monika Grubbauer, "Designed to Improve?," *City* 21, no.6 (2017): 769-78.

the authors, the small scale and curtailed ambitions of the social projects do almost nothing to disturb underlying conditions of poverty, inequality and housing shortages, nor do they halt the relentless march of ‘normal’ urban development by powerful actors for powerful actors. They identify the risk of such practices enabling these processes by attracting disproportionate attention, ameliorating only the worst excesses and legitimising the withdrawal of social provisions by government. Accordingly, they suggest that, rather than obsessing over the effects of the relatively small set of practices described as social, theorists and perhaps even practitioners need to engage more coherently and critically with the forces of anti-social urbanism.⁶⁴ They underline the limited extent to which practices of participation can critically engage with the problems set for them.⁶⁵

Paradoxically, although concerned quite explicitly with ‘social benefits’, the affirmative reference to small scales also offers a convenient way of not having to engage with the broader political, cultural and economic context (beyond a specific project) in substantial ways.⁶⁶

This aspect of contemporary practice has been explored by Valeria Federighi in her study of the relationships that developed between architectural practice and informal settlements between 2000 and 2016.⁶⁷ She highlights the inverse relationship between architects’ small local focus and the immense and expanding nature of the issues involved in informal settlements. In her view, this is related to the deep investment by the architectural practices involved in the notion of their own alternative status. This in turn derives from a particular viewpoint that is shared across many practices operating in the social and participatory field. Alternative practices define themselves not by what they are but by what they are not.⁶⁸ In this case, these practices are defined against both the deterministic and top-down approach epitomised by modernism and the pliant, market-subservience epitomised by post-modernism. In Federighi’s reading, these practices view large-scale approaches as inherently top-down and market-subservient. Therefore, any alternative that seeks to implement bottom-up and user-focused solutions cannot operate at a large scale and must by its nature work at the scale of the individual, local setting and hope that larger scales can be approached by building networks. For

⁶⁴ Richter, Göbel & Grubbauer., “Designed to Improve?,” 775-6.

⁶⁵ Richter, Göbel & Grubbauer, “Designed to Improve?,” 772-3.

⁶⁶ Richter, Göbel & Grubbauer, “Designed to Improve?,” 772.

⁶⁷ Valeria Federighi, *The Informal Stance: Representations of Architectural Design and Informal Settlements* (San Francisco: Applied Research + Design, ORO Editions, 2018). Here again the focus is not on explicitly participatory projects, but the concept inevitably informs the discussion given the ubiquity of participatory discourses in both theorising informal settlements and in projects seeking to intervene productively within them. The connection between participatory practices and architects’ interest in informal settlements is long and deep, resonating in the discourse of the 1960s (particularly through the figure of English architect John Turner) and the 2000s (through such practices as Caracas Urban Think Tank and Estudio Teddy Cruz).

⁶⁸ This restrictive condition of ‘alternative’ practices similarly caused the authors of *Spatial Agency* to move away from the term; see Awan, Schneider and Till, *Spatial Agency*.

Federighi, this hope seems unlikely to be realisable. She suggests a more productive approach could be generated by calling into question the assumption that establishing a large-scale project is inherently problematic.

Problems of Ethics: Being Good is not Good Enough

Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" opens with the line: "The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you".⁶⁹ In the first decades of the 21st century, this perceived 'good' status of participation has itself been brought into question. In 2005, Jeremy Till, together with Peter Blundell Jones and Doina Petrescu, published a group of papers from the 2002 conference at Sheffield University which sought to critically engage architectural history and theory with this re-emerging interest in participation. Till's contribution was the essay "The Negotiation of Hope", in which he updated his earlier critique of community architecture to focus specifically on the dynamics of participation in architecture.⁷⁰ He argued that participation in architecture had, at the time of writing, become a largely normative process, a token exercise, a box to tick. He described how, through an absence of criticism and a focus on its own 'goodness', the practice had lost its power to generate any significant change.⁷¹ He proposed instead a practice of 'transformative participation', one which recognises and works with the inherent power imbalances and issues of contingency that are part of every architectural encounter. The sense of participatory practices drawing their validity from their ethical stance rather than any actual efficacy is developed in depth by Claire Bishop within the distinct yet related field of participatory arts practices.⁷² According to Bishop, participatory practices are able to escape critical judgement by asserting their ethical credentials to offset any perceived deficits in aesthetics. Yet, as they operate within the art world, they are never genuinely judged on their social effects, in contrast to more straightforward, non-arts, social programs. This creates for Bishop a kind of critical blind-spot, a practice which uses its hybrid identity to avoid confronting the real problems of either art or social practice (Figure 5.10).

69 Rose, "Athens and Jerusalem," 333.

70 Till, "The Negotiation of Hope," 23-42. As discussed in Chapter 1, a retranslated version of De Carlo's 'Architecture's Public' is the first text in this book.

71 These issues had already been established as problematic in the field of international development: 'tales were told of participatory processes applied ritualistically, which turned out to be manipulative, or had in fact harmed those who were supposed to be empowered'. Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, "The Case for Participation as Tyranny" in *Participation: The New Tyranny*, eds Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari (London: Zed books, 2001), 1.

72 Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*. Bishop's critique has been contested by Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

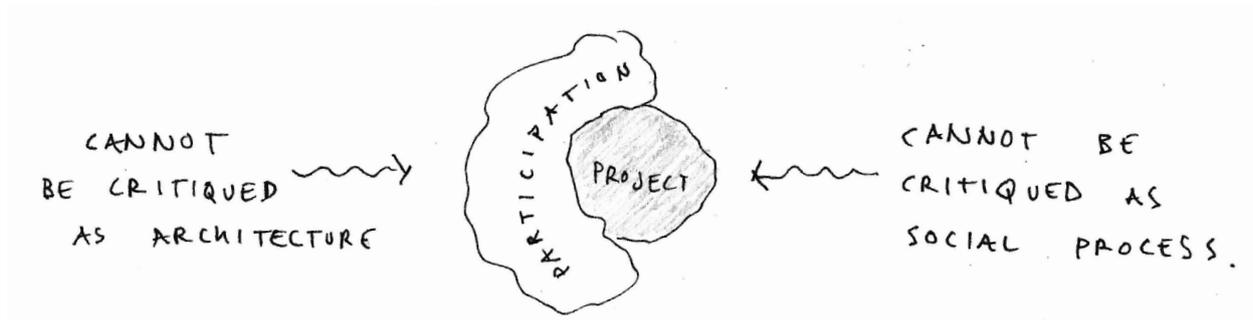


Figure 5.10. Claire Bishop's critique of participatory practices in art is based on what she perceives as the mutual shielding from judgement of actual efficacy. The same can be said of participatory architecture, in line with Till's argument above.

Berlin-based architect and curator Markus Miessen has become a prominent critical voice on the concept of participation in architecture. Between 2006 and 2011, Miessen developed his arguments against participation in a series of publications with eye-catching titles such as *The Violence of Participation* and *The Nightmare of Participation*.⁷³ In these works, Miessen sought to disrupt what he called participation's innocence. For him, participation had been hijacked by 'third-way' liberals and financial elites. It had created an avenue for politicians to evade responsibility and mechanisms for the self-exploitation of workers (Figure 5.11). In his introduction to Miessen's *Nightmare*, Eyal Weizman reminds us of the darker signification of terms like participation and collaboration (we could think of collaboration in France during Nazi occupation or participation in the accompanying genocides). What emerges clearly is that participation implies aligning oneself with the major power and that this is not always benign.⁷⁴

⁷³ Markus Miessen and Shumon Basar, eds., *Did Someone Say Participate? An Atlas of Spatial Practice* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006); Markus Miessen, *The Violence of Participation* (Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2007); Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation (Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality)* (Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2010); Markus Miessen and Nina Valerie Kolowratnik, eds., *Waking Up from The Nightmare of Participation* (Expodium, 2011). Markus Miessen, *Crossbenching. Toward Participation as Critical Spatial Practice*. (Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2016)

⁷⁴ Eyal Weizman, "The Paradox of Collaboration," *The Nightmare of Participation*, 9-11.

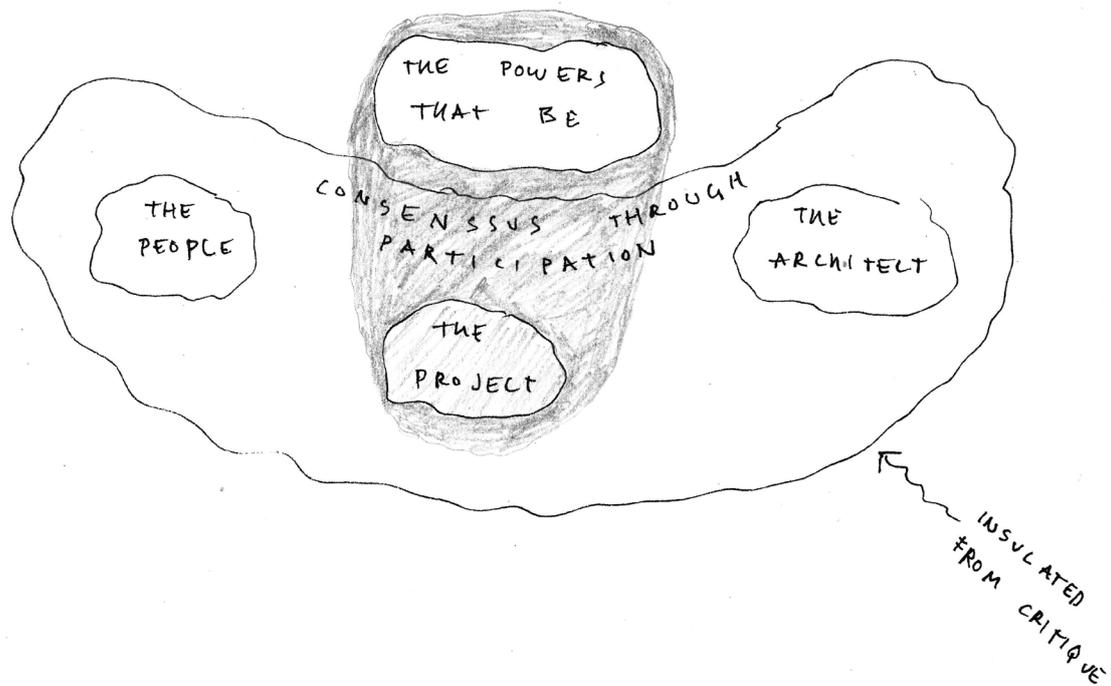


Figure 5.11. For Markus Miessen, the consensus aimed at by participation is simply a smokescreen that enables powerful players to insulate themselves from critique. This diagram illustrates how Bishop's critique can be transferred to architecture as an additional mechanism to protect the existing power relations.

While ostensibly discussions of participation in architecture, Miessen's numerous and lengthy volumes contain little in the way of engagement with actual practices of participation in architecture. While much of his polemic could be read against a model of participation roughly in line with that of Wates and Knevitt, his target is more accurately 'third-way' politics as typified by the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. He is more interested in reformulating how architects themselves might participate in other institutions than in reformulating participatory practice.⁷⁵ Thus, he seems to be seeking a new model in which critical practice can participate, rather than a new model of how participatory practices could be more critical. He proposes the model of the 'crossbencher', in which the conflictual architect can act as an uninvited outsider, a critical agent, an irritant. This model is less interested in processes that invite others into the architect's process than in setting up processes for architects to be able to force themselves into external discourses and projects as critical agents. Miessen's focus is on the intersections of politics, geography and architecture at the time of writing and has relatively little to contribute to historically grounded discussions of participation in architecture. Nevertheless, his work does raise some important considerations in regards to conflict, consensus and criticality in practices of participation.

⁷⁵This is perhaps an acknowledgement that this is always the way of participation: it is not a case of uncommon actors participating in architecture but, rather, of the architect participating in uncommon fields of action.

Central to Miessen's reappraisal of participation is political theorist Chantal Mouffe's notion of agonistic democracy.⁷⁶ Miessen draws heavily on her work to question what he sees as a central tenet of participation, the need for consensus.⁷⁷ Mouffe reminds us that, in politics, conflict and antagonism are ineradicable. The best we can do is to tame them to become agonism, a kind of friendly conflict, where the ground is set. The acceptance of conflict as a crucial ingredient in any genuine participation is central to Miessen's argument. For him, conflict is not only unavoidable, it has the potential to reinvigorate the practice of architecture.⁷⁸ In conversations with Mouffe, he sketches a practice of 'flexible-participation' operating with the minimum of consensus in order to remain projective and propositional rather than defensive. Fundamental to Miessen's and Mouffe's critiques of consensus in general and practices of participation in particular is its potential to smooth and soothe the political discords of any situation. Miessen seeks instead to disrupt the process, to ask questions, to be critical and to allow space for others to be critical in turn.⁷⁹

While Miessen's iconoclastic project has the appearance of a bold new argument, his central conclusions bear a distinct resemblance to the work of one of the most 'establishment' figures in participation, Giancarlo De Carlo. Hans Ulrich Obrist frames his preface to Miessen's first book on the subject with a quote from his interview with De Carlo, "Participation Lasts Forever".⁸⁰ Miessen's own reading of De Carlo, however, appears to have been superficial.⁸¹ In this regard, Miessen's critique inadvertently highlights how much has been forgotten and overlooked in contemporary discourse on participation, of which his work is an exemplar. Miessen's resistance to consensus as closure or a balm for conflict was a theme in De Carlo's writing from the outset. De Carlo's position was that consensus should remain permanently open, continually renewed by confrontation between the image of the plan

⁷⁶ Mouffe was explicitly drawn into conversation with architecture during at this time. This extended well beyond her engagements with Miessen. See for example: Brian Hatton, "Seeking the place of 'the political': Chantal Mouffe at Architecture Exchange- (Travails with an agonism aunt: How is architecture political? Chantal Mouffe, Pier Vittorio Aureli, Reinhold Martin, Ines Wiezman and Sarah Whiting)" *Architectural Research Quarterly* 19, no.1) (2015): 13-17. The editors of *An Architektur* had referred to Mouffe's work in their introduction to "Camp for Oppositional Architecture," eds. Oliver Clemens, Jesko Fezer, Kim Förster, Anke Hagemann, Sabine Horlitz, Anita Kaspar, Andreas Müller, Special issue, *An Architektur* 18 (2006). 4. Miessen was a participant at this event and was critical of its outcomes.

⁷⁷ Miessen has developed this argument over a series of publications. Of particular note is Markus Miessen, *The Space of Agonism. Markus Miessen in Conversation with Chantal Mouffe* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012).

⁷⁸ Tahl Kaminer discusses Mouffe's relationship to architectural practices of participation further and in relation to other key thinkers on radical democracy in Tahl Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture. Political Contestation and Agency* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁷⁹ This last is also enacted also within Miessens' publications on participation, which incorporate multiple authors, who are given space for responses, critiques and rebuttals to his own thesis. See in particular Miessen, *Waking up from the Nightmare of Participation*.

⁸⁰ Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Preface: Participation Lasts Forever," in *Did Someone Say Participate?*, eds. Markus Miessen and Shumon Basar, 18.

⁸¹ He references De Carlo only once in his final PhD dissertation, in a passing comparison to Yona Friedman and Bernard Rudofsky. Markus Miessen "Crossbenching: Towards a Proactive Mode of Participation as Critical Spatial Practice" (PhD diss., Goldsmiths College London/University of London, 2017), 80.

and the proposed receivers of it.⁸² The realistic utopia played a key role in this model of conflictual consensus. The architect was to act as a critical agent, opening up possibilities through the use of architectural images: ‘The job of the planner is to open the sequence of hypotheses enlarging the image beyond the margins of the framework imposed by the client: to show what we could (should) have’.⁸³ For Miessen the ‘missing ingredient’ of participation is the possibility to act in a simultaneously critical and propositional manner: ‘While we still need critical reflection, I strongly believe that in order to practice, one also needs to be projective’.⁸⁴ Here is another echo of De Carlo’s description of a practice of participation which engages the projective act of design as a means by which to continually bring itself into productive conflict with the various others involved in the project.

Problems of Power 4: It’s Complicated

Initial engagements with the wave of social and participatory ‘alternative’ practices tended to be framed as catalogues or compendiums of practices. This might have been due to the contemporaneity and diversity of each practice in terms of both context and form.⁸⁵ Little space was given to analysing the actual effects of such practices; all ‘social’ projects were placed into a black box, never to be discussed again.⁸⁶ Australian scholars Amelia Thorpe, Timothy Moore and Lee Stickells have identified one important task for research in this area as the breaking down of the monolithic cataloguing of diverse practices in order to understand the specificities of what distinguishes them and what commonalities may group them together.⁸⁷ As writers have progressed from simply pointing to such projects as an emerging phenomenon, the motivations, operations and actual effects have increasingly been questioned and a number of fundamental contradictions have been revealed.

Yet, again due to the sheer diversity of scale, context and type, some of these critical engagements have perpetuated the simplicity of the earlier cataloguing, although the tone is now generally dismissive rather than celebratory, with all projects labelled as token, manipulative or ineffectual. Fran Tonkiss notes the ease with which we can shift from uncritical acceptance to complete negation. She does not accept the claims of these practices uncritically, describing them as ‘routinely compromised, frequently

⁸² De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 11.

⁸³ De Carlo, “Il pubblico,” 98

⁸⁴ Kenny Cupers and Markus Miessen, “Participation and/or Criticality. Thoughts on an Architectural Practice for Urban Change,” *Thresholds* 40 (2012): 109.

⁸⁵ This refers not only to exhibitions documented through their catalogues, such as Lepik, *Small Scale, Big Change*. and Borasi and Zardini. *Actions*. but also to academic works such as Awan, Schneider and Till, *Spatial Agency*.

⁸⁶ See Jones and Card, “Constructing “Social Architecture””

⁸⁷ Amelia Thorpe, Timothy Moore and Lee Stickells, “Pop-up Justice? Reflecting on Relationships in the Temporary City,” in *Transience and Permanence in Urban Development*, ed. John Henneberry (Hoboken: Wiley, 2017), 151-170.

co-opted, sometimes corrupted and often doomed'.⁸⁸ Yet neither does she dismiss them with the kind of blanket critique that sees all such practices profiting from austerity, enabling and cloaking neoliberalism—an attitude she describes as 'damned if you do and right if you don't'. Instead, she follows the individual cases in detail, attentive to their situational and relational context.⁸⁹

Kenton Card, an American researcher and practitioner with links to the *An Architektur* group, has similarly sought to navigate between outright dismissal and unquestioning celebration by drawing on Actor Network Theory to undertake careful exploration of controversies in real projects of social architecture in the North American context.⁹⁰ Card's analysis reveals the shortcomings and potential blind spots of the three celebrated practices with which he engages: a Rural Studio project which produces a community building without any certainty of which 'community' actors will actually run its programs on an ongoing basis; an Architecture for Humanity chapter which, despite adopting the organisational form of the original organisation, lacks the tools to initiate any projects; and a design build studio run by Sergio Palleroni which, while seeking to provide additional affordable housing in the form of 'Alley Flats', may unintentionally contribute to the process of gentrification that created the unaffordability in the first place. What is made clear is the crucial importance of the context in which each intervention is located. A model that works in one place, as with the Architecture for Humanity example, may fail in another or worse, as in the Palleroni case, may have effects which actually harm the intended beneficiaries. Drawing on these examples, Card concludes not that architecture should give up any attempt at social impact, but rather that it should confront its own contradictions, maintaining criticality in practice.⁹¹ It is for this reason that philosopher Didier Debaise, in conversation with Isabelle Doucet, suggested that we move away from presenting stories of success and instead look to the networks of dependencies in which they are involved.⁹²

Tonkiss describes how projects which could easily be dismissed are actually producing benefits, even though they do not escape misappropriation. In the interstitial gardening practice of *atelier d'architecture autogérée*, Tonkiss does not find a form of quietism or placation, as might be inferred from the softness

⁸⁸ Tonkiss, "Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City," 318.

⁸⁹ Tonkiss, "Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City," 323

⁹⁰ Kenton Card, "Democratic Social Architecture or Experimentation on the Poor?" *Design Philosophy Papers* 9, no.3 (2011). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.sydney.edu.au/scholarly-journals/democratic-social-architecture-experimentation-on/docview/993137636/se-2?accountid=14757> accessed 12.12.2019.

⁹¹ Card, "Democratic Social Architecture or Experimentation on the Poor? ." As Tahl Kaminer has pointed out, these practices often already engage in substantial internal critical reflection. This is often enabled by the fact, noted by Moore, Stickells and Thorpe, that the protagonists are often active both in practice and in critical academic work.

⁹² Isabelle Doucet, Didier Debaise and Benedicte Zitouni, "Narrate, Speculate, Fabulate: Didier Debaise and Benedicte Zitouni in Conversation with Isabelle Doucet," *Architectural Theory Review* 22, no.1 (2018): 9-23.

of the medium.⁹³ For Tonkiss, their projects use gardening as a model in which persistent, regular care of a site become a critical urban practice through sheer repetitive occupation and tending. The first project by aaa, ECObox, appears at first glance to be a typical piece of ‘pop-up’ urbanism, using reclaimed timber palettes to construct a temporary garden on a vacant piece of land. Yet underlying the project is a rigorous conceptual understanding of its own role, a logic that resists the problems of cooption. The notion of self-management is key to enabling this resistance and criticality: ‘Our *architecture autogérée* is not only another example of participatory architecture, but a critical take on it’.⁹⁴ It can be seen to run through each step of aaa’s projects. Initially, self-management occurs through the autonomy the group creates from commissioning powers by self-initiating projects on remnant pieces of land. Over time, the projects gather participants who eventually form a group which takes on the management role, at which point the project becomes autonomous from aaa.

Yet, even when the practitioners are not just implicated but actually contracted by such forces, there may be the possibility of gaining benefits from a ‘strategic sell-out’. Tonkiss cites as an example a large development in London, on which muf art/architecture were the landscape architects, and which was delayed due to the financial crisis. muf developed two cricket pitches on the site as it awaited eventual redevelopment. From one perspective, the project increases the cultural capital of the site at little cost to the developers and, being temporary, is of no value to the community. Another perspective reveals additional layers. The cricket pitches were regularly well used by groups of Afghani refugee children, given the area’s proximity to the local immigration office. Although 3-5 years is a short time in the life of a city, it is a relatively long period in the life of a child. This observation, it must be said, cuts both ways.

The Need for Criticality in an Architecture of Participation

This chapter has presented a selection of perspectives in order to lay out a number of fundamental challenges to contemporary practices of participation in architecture. Central to these challenges is the need to develop a much more critical understanding of the power dynamics at work in the relationships that are established through participatory processes. Clearly, architecture needs to maintain a level of criticality in its dialogue with users, maintaining the power implicit in its disciplinary knowledge while simultaneously being self-critical enough to allow users to enter into productive conflict with their implicit values and biases. Even more significantly, however, participatory architecture needs to move

⁹³ Tonkiss, “Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City,” 316-317.

⁹⁴ Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou, “Tactics for a Transgressive Practice,” *Architectural Design* 83, no. 6 (2013): 64.

beyond the dialectic of architect and user and engage much more critically with the systems of power which frame each intervention. Without careful consideration of these relationships and the development of strategies to address them, participation very easily becomes a caricature of itself: a tokenistic engagement that manipulates and placates people affected by developments; a cynically deployed tool of value creation; and a contributor to processes of gentrification and property speculation. The potential pitfalls of participation are more numerous than ever in the context of neoliberalism, where every proposed alternative is at risk of immediate absorption, instrumentalisation and commodification.

The question therefore becomes: how can participation critically understand and operate within its relationships of dependence and effect? The next chapter addresses this question by describing models that already exist within architectural discourse on criticality which attempt, in different ways, to maintain both autonomy and engagement in practice. The possibilities for critical practice suggested by these distinct discourses will be developed through a direct discussion of practices and projects associated with the resurgent interest in participation as introduced through this chapter.

6. Criticality between Utopia and Reality

The central argument of this thesis is that Giancarlo De Carlo's notion of the realistic utopia, understood as the production of counter-images iteratively refined in dialogue with society, could provide a conceptual tool for participatory practices of architecture which seek to maintain criticality towards the structures that frame their interventions. The first four chapters explored the concept in relation to De Carlo's own writings and his experiments in practice, situating it within the multiple contexts in which he was operating as he developed and then moved away from this idea as an operative term. The fifth chapter considered a range of later influential commentaries on participation which claimed that participatory architectural practice, through its various instances and iterations, lacks the means to critically understand and act in relation to the broader contexts in which it is operating.¹ In this chapter, the question of criticality itself is examined, with a focus on its relevance to contemporary practices of participation in architecture.

As argued in Chapter 5, the question of architecture's potential to be critical of the structures which enable it raises key challenges for participatory practices. Despite their claims to be working in the interest of disempowered groups in society, these practices have been accused of simply furthering the interests of the politically and economically powerful by providing ethical cover to their unchallenged operations. This contradiction between intention and effect, apparent from the earliest discourses on participation within architecture, has become ever more intense in the present conditions of largely privatised production of housing and public space.

This chapter describes and diagrammatically illustrates several models for architecture's critical position in relation to society and power. It begins by framing what is meant by criticality in architecture within the context of key positions and debates on criticality and autonomy. The influential work of the architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri on the inescapable complicity of architecture in capitalism provides some basic coordinates. The more recent Anglo-American discussions on the critical and post-critical are introduced in the context of what critics such as Hilde Heynen have identified as an artificially restricted choice between modes of ineffective criticality and uncritical performance in architecture. Finally, the chapter examines alternative

¹ This has been understood variously as a lack of criticality towards expressed desires (populism), a lack of criticality towards actual effects (tokenism), a suppression of genuine conflicts, a means to inoculate itself from judgement, and a complete assimilation into neoliberal forms of self-exploitation.

positions that have emerged outside these debates. These positions attempt, in different ways, to maintain both autonomy and engagement in practice and are therefore directly relevant to the question of criticality within practices of participatory architecture.

Two recent lines of discourse on criticality in architecture guide this discussion. The first is the reconceptualisation of critical engagements with reality drawn from Bruno Latour's work on the concept of the *Dingpolitik*, through which objects can be understood as gathering vast and multilayered 'communities of concern'. The second is the effort to reintroduce utopian practices within architecture as critical alternatives to the 'anti-utopia' of neoliberalism and the 'regressive' utopias of populism. The possibilities for critical practice outlined by these distinct discourses are developed through a discussion of practices and projects associated with the resurgent interest in participation from the early 2000s. Through this analysis, I argue that two key features of the realistic utopia have run parallel to, and often overlapped with, the return of participation in architectural practice: an interest in the relational networks surrounding the objects of architecture, and the critical function of utopian practice.

The selection of projects and practices explored in this chapter has been guided by the need to illustrate particular approaches to these two aspects. The sample taken within this chapter should be read as an initial testing of the thesis within broadly well-established examples from existing disciplinary literature. With some limited exceptions the projects principally reflect practices attempting forms of critical, participatory practice in areas of housing and public space, within, or on the peripheries of, affluent societies. In the interest of brevity, the selection has focussed on practices with relatively limited output, rather than highly prolific practices. This limited selection is intended as a proof of concept, rather than an exhaustive sample, and the intention would be for further research to further expand the possibilities of the realistic utopia to understand the operations of the practices.

Ineffective Critique versus Uncritical Engagement.

Architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri, a colleague of De Carlo at the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (IUAV), has had a significant influence on contemporary architectural theory's approach to the question of criticality. In the late 1960s, when De Carlo was drawing his conception of participation from a critique of the modern movement, Tafuri was engaged in a

project of analysing the effects of the ‘utopian’ social ambitions of the architectural avant-garde.² In his analysis, each radical move by architecture, despite its revolutionary intentions, was not only absorbed by the capitalist system but functioned to break new ground for it, expanding the reach of capital into new arenas, as illustrated in Figure 6.1.³

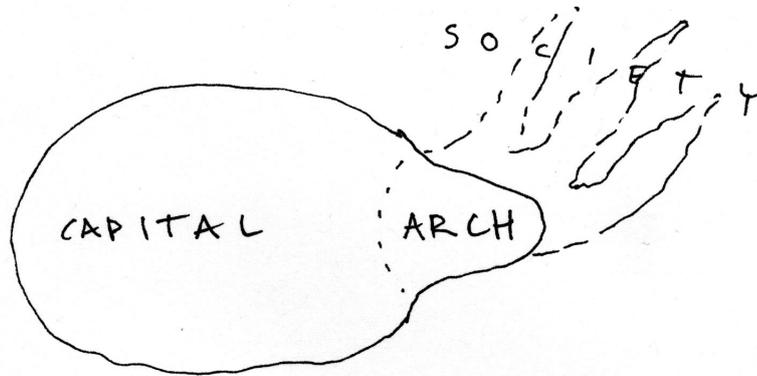


Figure 6.1. For Manfredo Tafuri, architecture is completely dependent on and therefore complicit with the capitalist system. As a result, any ‘radical’ moves attempted by architecture only open up new fronts for capitalist appropriation.

In his discussions of De Carlo’s work at Matteotti, Tafuri described the notion of participation as itself a ‘mythology’.⁴ While the historian did not go into any detailed critique of participation, his general framing of complicity is played out in more recent commentaries on participation.⁵ For Tafuri, the inescapable complicity of architectural production was a reason to prioritise ideological criticism, to reveal architecture’s self-deluding myths. Only once these myths were dispelled could the reformation of those tasks formerly called architecture take place.⁶

Tafuri’s position has been interpreted by his critics as a kind of nihilism—a position in which the architect is so hopelessly complicit in the mechanics of power that any attempts at critical action are doomed from the outset.⁷ This bold impossibility has been used by architects to renounce

² Culminating in the publication of: Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia: Architettura e sviluppo capitalistico*. (Bari: Laterza, 1973). Translated into English as *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (MIT Press, 1976).

³ This reading has been assisted by Tahl Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture: Political Contestation and Agency* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁴ Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, trans. Jessica Irvine (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 121.

⁵ As discussed in the previous chapter, these critiques emphasise the mechanisms by which participatory projects cannot escape being operative functions of capitalism, providing cover for extractive real-estate developments and processes of gentrification. This critique is well summarised by Fran Tonkiss, "Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City," *City* 17, no. 3 (2013): 312-324.

⁶ Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, 182.

⁷ See for example: Nathaniel Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), 71-73. De Carlo himself rejected the historian’s position as too ‘finalistic’. Giancarlo De Carlo, "Architecture is too Important to Leave to the Architects: A Conversation with Giancarlo De Carlo by Ole Bouman and Roemer van Toorn," *Archis* 20, no. 2 (July, 2005): 21-6. The interview was originally conducted on October 7, 1987.

social utopias for purely ‘architectural’ ones.⁸ Canadian architect and scholar George Baird, in his summary of the lineage of critical architecture in North America, notes the influence of Tafuri on the dialogue around ‘critical’ architecture within both K. Michael Hays’s theory and Peter Eisenman’s practice.⁹ While the two are often paired together in discussions of criticality, Baird makes clear that Hays and Eisenman combined particular understandings of Tafuri’s work with a range of disparate influences to proceed in quite distinct directions—Hays to articulate a theory of criticality in architecture, Eisenman to pursue a form of autonomous architectural process. What was common was a shared advocacy for ‘resistance’ in architecture.

At the 1976 *‘Quale movimento moderno’* debate at the Venice Biennale described in Chapter 4, Eisenman had argued, in part in response to De Carlo’s rejection of the American’s contribution, that exploration of the ‘art’ of architecture was just as valid as an architecture of social purpose.¹⁰ At the accompanying exhibition, this claim was explored in the form of speculative drawing, a practice which would be increasingly promoted within the discipline over the coming decade.¹¹ For Tahl Kaminer, Eisenman’s interest in architecture as an autonomous discipline and his pursuit of formal research was symptomatic of a widespread withdrawal of architecture from overtly societal concerns—a move necessitated by the same ‘crisis’ of the modernist project that had precipitated the project of participation, albeit moving in the opposite direction.¹²

In his influential article “Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form”, Hays sought a new means of interpreting architecture’s relationship to society at large. He argued that two distinct ways of understanding architecture’s relationship to the social, political and economic frameworks had come to dominate, as illustrated in Figure 6.2. The first was that architecture was hopelessly complicit, purely representational of the dominant political structures which enabled it. The second was that architecture should be understood as a formal system wholly detached from its historical context.¹³ Hays’s essay can be read as a search for a critical position for architecture between the

⁸ This can be read through direct connections such as Aldo Rossi’s dedication to Tafuri of his *Architettura assassinata* series. Tafuri’s work was also used in this way by Peter Eisenman, as discussed by Sarah Whiting, “No” in *Eisenmann-Krier. Two Ideologies* (New York: Monacelli, 2004), 43-50.

⁹ Baird, “Criticality and Its Discontents,” 17.

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of this event see Chapter 4.

¹¹ Bart Lootsma, a practitioner of this form in the Netherlands through the 1980s, has reflected on its evolution. For Lootsma, this kind of practice with its emphasis on negation became a dead-end, precipitating his own search for a new mode of engagement and pragmatism. This interest in ‘doing’ something later became evident in the so-called ‘post-critical’ debate. Bart Lootsma, “Theory and Practice,” in *Positions on Emancipation: Architecture between Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Florian Hertweck (Zürich:Lars Müller Publishers, 2018): 198-213

¹² Tahl Kaminer, *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation: The Reproduction of Post-Fordism in Late-Twentieth-Century Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 95-102.

¹³ K. Michael Hays, “Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form,” *Perspecta* 21 (1984): 15-29.

autonomous and determinist positions.¹⁴ Hays rejected a view of architecture as an ‘instrument of culture’, as it limits architecture to nothing more than a representation of the dominant culture. He also rejected a reading of architecture as ‘autonomous form’ since, although it liberates architecture from the absolute social determinism of being an ‘instrument of culture’, it is similarly robbed of any power.

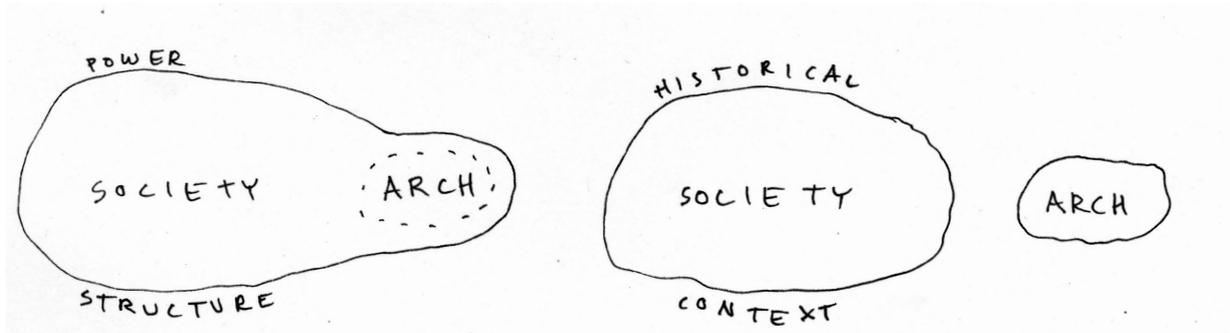


Figure 6.2. Michael Hays’s critiques of the positions of total complicity (left) and total autonomy (right).

Hays describes a third possibility in which architecture could achieve a form of resistance by occupying a space between its relationship to culture and its autonomy as form. Architecture for Hays could only be critical by resisting commodification without cutting itself off completely, as illustrated in Figure 6.3. This sense of tension between poles, and the liminal position required, persists through the many later reformulations of architecture’s relationship to the social, critical or otherwise.

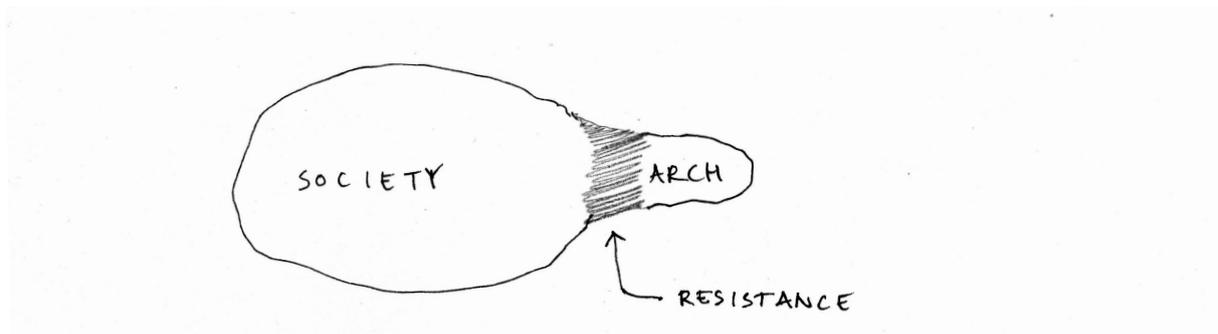


Figure 6.3. Hays describes an alternative understanding of architecture’s potential for critique as an engaged resistance.

¹⁴ Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting would later describe Hays’s essay as one attempt to hybridise Tafuri (representative of the complicit role) and Colin Rowe (representative of the autonomous role). Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting, “Notes around the Doppler Effect and other Moods of Modernism,” *Perspecta* 33 (2002): 72-77.

In the early 21st century, a new debate on criticality in architecture emerged, largely focused on what was described as the ‘post-critical’ and centred around discussion of a 2002 essay by the American academics Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting.¹⁵ This was a direct response to Hays’s earlier piece in which they seek to move beyond a ‘critical’ architecture towards a ‘projective’ one. They critique the critical stances of Hays and Eisenman as being locked in an overly strenuous ‘hot’ resistance. As a counter, they propose a ‘cooler’ and more pragmatic practice of Projective Architecture. They contrast Hays’s and Eisenman’s understanding of ‘disciplinarity [...] as autonomy (enabling critique, representation, and signification)’ with the projective understanding of it ‘as instrumentality (projection, performativity, and pragmatics)’.¹⁶ In other words, they are arguing for a move away from a preoccupation with the meaning of architecture towards a concern with how it can act. Figure 6.4 illustrates this refocussing of the conversation on the practices of architecture itself.

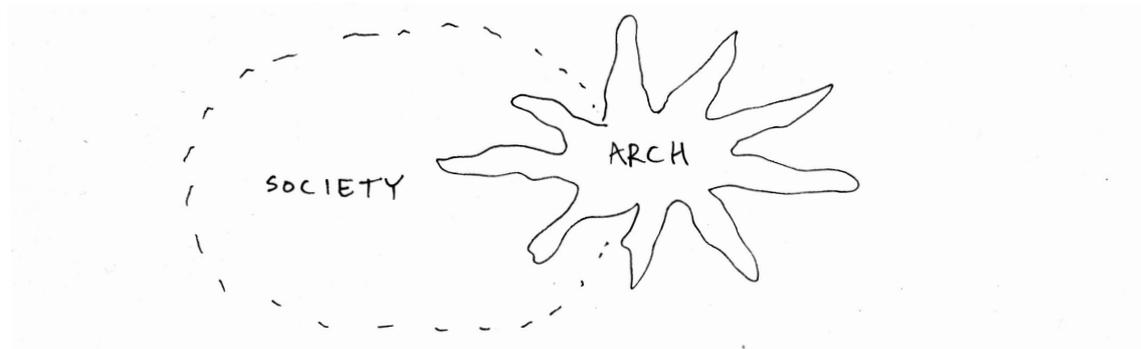


Figure 6.4.. Relational model drawn from the formulations of Somol and Whiting’s ‘projective’ architecture, which abandons ‘critical’ resistance to focus on what architecture actually does.

As Baird notes in his summary of the ‘post-critical’ turn,¹⁷ Michael Speaks had preceded Somol and Whiting in his Design Intelligence series.¹⁸ With Speaks, we can also see frustration with the disconnection between theory and practice. In opposition to a hard position where critical is taken to mean being resistant to culture, Design Intelligence is positioned as a nimble and responsive practice; it does what it can, when it can, how it can. By abandoning resistance in favour of acceptance and engagement with the situation, architecture could be effective once again. Baird traces this pragmatic turn even further back, noting Rem Koolhaas’s comment that architecture, at its heart, can never be critical. For Koolhaas, the sheer complexity of balancing interests inherent

¹⁵ Somol and Whiting, “Notes Around the Doppler Effect,” 72-77.

¹⁶ Somol and Whiting, “Notes Around the Doppler Effect,” 74.

¹⁷ George Baird, “‘Criticality’ and Its Discontents,” *Harvard Design Magazine* 21 (2004).

¹⁸ Michael Speaks, “Design Intelligence and the New Economy,” *Architectural Record* (January 2002): 72–79. Michael Speaks, “Design Intelligence: Part 1, Introduction,” *A+U* (December 2002): 10–18.

in the architectural project precluded any superfluous ‘criticality’ and are, in fact, more interesting in themselves.¹⁹

That the ‘critical’ architecture being debated by the pragmatists was one peculiar to North America has been pointed out by the Belgian architectural historian and theorist Hilde Heynen.²⁰ Heynen equates this with the dual understanding of the historic *avant-garde*: heroic (against mass culture) and transgressive (against the division between art and everyday life). Heynen takes issue with Somol’s and Whiting’s claim to confront criticality in architecture, arguing that it understands critical architecture only in the ‘heroic’ Hays/Eisenman sense. Somol’s and Whiting’s ‘projective’ stance perpetuates this view by seeking novelty rather than recognising that critical architecture will not be reinvigorated by becoming ‘post’ but by returning to its real roots in critical theory and social reality.²¹

Both Projective Architecture and Design Intelligence operate as a tool or technique regardless of intention.²² In the post-critical debate, engagement and criticality are positioned as mutually exclusive. The dichotomy of critical theory vs uncritical practice offers little to the concurrent debate around participation, which had begun to worry about its own uncritical performance.²³ If there is to be a productive position on criticality for practices of participatory architecture, it would need to find a way to operate between criticality and engagement.

From Criticality to Reality

A perspective which discards the dichotomy of criticality and engagement altogether was emerging at a similar time to the post-critical debate in architecture in the work of French sociologist Bruno Latour. Latour’s 2004 article presented a thorough critique of the tools and tactics of criticality

¹⁹ Hilde Heynen provides a succinct account of Koolhaas’s attitude to the critical in Hilde Heynen, “Intervention in the Relations of Production, or Sublimation of Contradictions? On Commitment Then and Now,” in *New Commitment* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2003), 43-4.

²⁰ Hilde Heynen, “A Critical Position for Architecture,” in *Critical Architecture*, eds. Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill, Murray Fraser, Mark Dorrian (London: Routledge, 2007): 48-56. In addition to Heynen’s work, this volume contains numerous works which interrogate the meaning and future of critical architecture.

²¹ This critique ties with Tzonis and Lefaivre’s categorisation of the ‘narcissistic phase’ of architecture in the late seventies. They describe how architecture had maintained the sense of itself as *avant-garde* by separating itself from any social concern to focus on the novelty and pleasure of their own aesthetic products. Alexander Tzonis and Laine Lefaivre, “The Narcissist Phase in Architecture,” *Harvard Architecture Review* 1 (1980): 53-60.

²² This places them with what Isabelle Doucet refers to as the ‘practice turn’ in architecture. Isabelle Doucet, *The Practice Turn in Architecture: Brussels after 1968*, (London: Ashgate, 2015), 14-16.

²³ See the discussion in Chapter 5

itself.²⁴ The text is a self-conscious response to the problem created by constructivist approaches that pick apart the hidden meanings of things to the point that they become unbelievable. Latour, who had made a name for himself as an active and enthusiastic proponent of this approach in the field of science studies, was horrified to see such an approach used to artificially generate controversy around issues such as global warming.²⁵ To counter this tendency, he advocated not just redirecting critique to new targets but also changing the tools by which critique could operate:

Can we devise another powerful descriptive tool that deals this time with matters of concern and whose import then will no longer be to debunk but to protect and to care, [...] to transform the critical urge in the ethos of someone who *adds* reality to matters of fact and not *subtract* reality?²⁶

Albena Yaneva has played a key role in translating Bruno Latour and the broader framework of Actor Network Theory (ANT), of which his ideas are part, into architectural discourse. For her, the problem lies with architectural theory's failure to take note of changes in understandings of the social itself.²⁷ Yaneva argues that critical architecture, with its basis in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, relies on outdated notions of society. She argues that critical architecture tended to view society as static—a solid frame against which to explain the hidden motivations and true meanings of architecture—or else as a kind of mute substance which architecture can act upon and transform. Yaneva argues that neither society nor architecture are as stationary or as easily reducible as critical architecture would seem to have us believe.²⁸ Similarly, Kaminer has observed that, from the late 1960s, architecture gave in to the perception of complete social determinism just as the social sciences were developing more complex and interdependent formulations.²⁹ That is to say, the crisis of modernism simply reversed the modernist social determinism, rather than acknowledging that it rarely flows in only one direction.³⁰

²⁴ Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2004): 225-248.

²⁵ Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?," 226.

²⁶ Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?," 232.

²⁷ Albena Yaneva. *Mapping Controversies in Architecture* (London: Ashgate, 2013) In her rejection of the critical project in architecture, Yaneva echoes the broader sentiments of Latour.

²⁸ In "Give me a Gun and I will Make Buildings Move," Yaneva and Latour seek ways to describe the non-static quality of architecture, which they re-cast as fluid, pulled and stretched, snipped and augmented by a hugely complex network of actors before seeming to settle on a form which nevertheless continues to be recast, misused and modified. Bruno Latour and Albena Yaneva, "Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An Ant's View of Architecture," in *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research* (Basel: Birkhauser, 2008): 80-89.

²⁹ Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture*, 10.

³⁰ The identification of multidirectional influence between architecture and the structures of society was discussed in Chapter 2 as a key moment in the emergence of the realistic utopia in De Carlo's work.

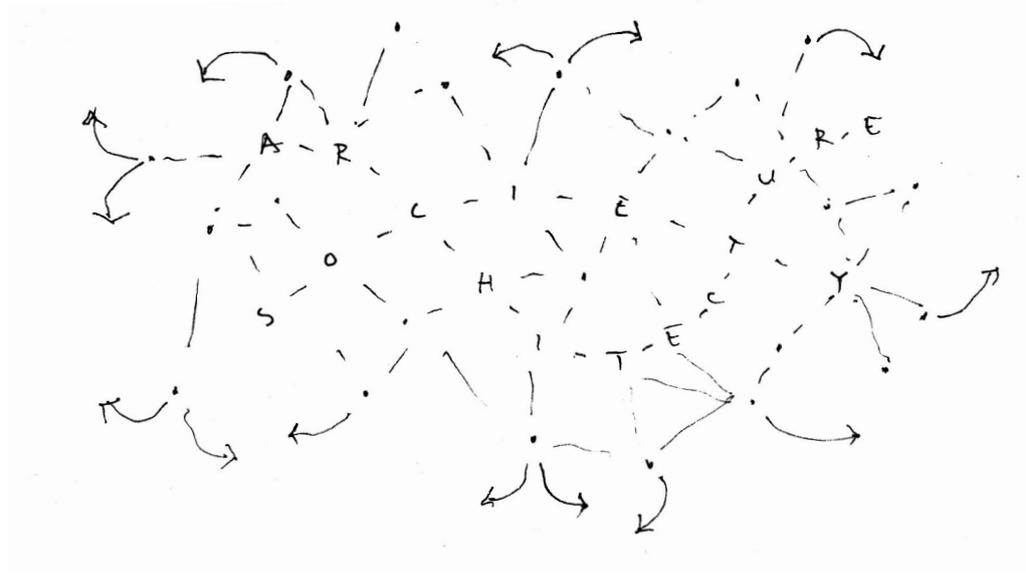


Figure 6.5. Relational model drawn from the work of Yaneva and Latour, in which neither architecture nor society are static or solid entities but, rather, networks of elements in constant motion.

Figure 6.5 shows the entirely different structure of the relational model of architecture and society which can be drawn from the work of Latour and Yaneva. While the previous positions focussed on boundary conditions, here all boundaries have dissolved and chains of influence are conceptualised in similar terms to those described previously by Jeremy Till, via Foucault, as a ‘productive network which runs through the whole social body’.³¹

In the same year that “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?” was published, Latour was working with Peter Wiebel, director of the Zentrum für Kunst und Medien (ZKM), Karlsruhe, on an exhibition that interrogated the political operations of images.³² Two years later, Latour and Weibel organised another exhibition and publication, “Making Things Public”, in which Latour extended his conception of ‘matters of concern’ to specifically discuss the political agency of objects.³³ Latour’s opening essay proposes the neologism *Dingpolitik* to connote the political agency of objects. Latour taps into the Heideggerian notion of objects as ‘things’ which, in the archaic

³¹ The quote is by Michel Foucault and is used by Jeremy Till to discuss the actuality of power relations in practices of participation., “Architecture of the Impure Community,” in *Occupying Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 72.

³² Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *ICONOCLASH Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002). The exhibition featured a reconstruction of Arata Isozaki’s “electric Labyrinth” which was destroyed at the 1968 Milan Triennale. The publication also featured an interview with Giancarlo De Carlo regarding this event.

³³ Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

Germanic language, signified not only the object but the gathering of life which took place around it. Latour proposes this as a mechanism by which to engage with contemporary political reality by observing and recording precisely how objects, as ‘matters of concern’, gather a complex web of other actors around them; through this ‘gathering’, the object can obtain a kind of agency. According to Latour, each object (whether glaciers in Greenland or repairs to your apartment building) gathers around it a set of disparate opinions, passions and interested parties. There is continuity not in the opinions but in the attachment to the object. We are brought together by what we disagree on; in this way, objects become contested public spaces which bind us to each other.³⁴

This kind of thinking reveals groups gathered not by shared objectives or values (such as religion, environmental concern, membership of a party, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, organisation, association) but rather heterogenous groups with conflicting values brought together by their the ‘things’ that matter to them. Each thing, in its specificity, may offer a different way of bringing closure to the issues that swirl around it. This notion of things instigating ‘communities of concern’ is clearly evident in the practice of architecture. Architects are used to negotiating an object, as design, as building, through the desires, opinions, advice and orders of a diverse set of ‘stakeholders’ and consultants. This understanding calls for participatory practices of architecture to acknowledge the much broader community of concern to whom buildings ‘matter’. As Pelle Ehn and others have noted, this articulation of the social dimension of objects may assist participatory architecture to overcome some of its conflicts and contradictions.³⁵ Latour’s concept of *Dingpolitik*, when applied to critical, participatory architecture, is useful in directing us to the object at the centre of the discussion rather than fixating on the mechanisms of the discussion itself. While we may not share the same point of view on an object/issue/thing, we do share the thing in question. This is valuable in better understanding the dynamics of participatory architecture in a ‘realistic’ way, accepting, as Miessen and Till ask us to, that conflict and disagreement are integral to any practice of participation.

³⁴ Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: The MIT Press, 2005), 4-21.

³⁵ Pelle Ehn, "Participation in Design Things," *Proceedings of the Tenth Anniversary Conference on Participatory Design 2008* (Indiana University, 2008), 92-101.

The ideas of Latour and ANT are present in contemporary accounts of participation in architecture.³⁶ Kenny Card has used Latour's introduction to Actor Network Theory as a means to enter the 'controversies' of specific projects within architecture's so-called social turn.³⁷ Isabelle Doucet makes specific use of Latour's 'matters of concern' to understand the role of overlooked objects within a number of participatory and critical interventions in Brussels, producing 'richer more complex accounts through the study of 'participatory artefacts' such as neighbourhood plans, urban policies, or buildings'.³⁸ For Doucet, it is crucial for architecture to understand that objects are never autonomous, bound forms existing in themselves but, rather, networks of interaction, concern and entanglements. Objects are not made meaningful by their symbolism but by their alliances and entanglements. For buildings, these are their networks of fabrication. Unlike Yaneva, Doucet uses these understandings to propose a revitalisation rather than a rejection of the critical project, as a criticality-in-practice, a criticality-from-within.³⁹ For Doucet, this approach allows us to understand processes of participation beyond the reductive oppositional pairings criticised by Jeremy Till and others.

Some, such as the American architectural historian Reinhold Martin, have pointed to a potential danger in Latour's thinking on criticality, worrying that by laying down our critical weapons we vacate the field for other, less sensitive and nuanced approaches to dominate.⁴⁰ Here it is useful to consider the work of Maria Puig de la Bellacasa on shifting Latour's notion of 'matters of concern' into 'matters of care'.⁴¹ The problem for de la Bellacasa with Latour's 'matters of concern' is that they remain passive. She contrasts this with a notion of care, drawn from a specifically feminist understanding of the term, 'as an ethically and politically charged practice'. This provides us with a potential way to practise *Dingpolitik*. Care, as distinct from concern, 'involves a notion of doing and intervening'.⁴² Care, thus, has both a critical and an active edge; it involves simultaneously the labour of maintenance, an affective state and an ethico-political stance.

In his introduction to Celine Condarelli's book on participatory support structures, the arts writer Jan Voerwort identifies a dilemma in the act of care which sums up and generalises the problem

³⁶ Liesbeth Huybrechts, Cristiano Storni, Yanki Lee, Selina Schepers, Jessica Schoffelen, Katrien Dreesen, *Participation is Risky. Approaches to Joint Creative Processes*, (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2014).

³⁷ Kenton Card, "Democratic Social Architecture or Experimentation on the Poor?: Ethnographic Snapshots," *Design Philosophy Papers* 9, no. 3 (2011): 217-234

³⁸ Doucet, *The Practice Turn in Architecture*, 133.

³⁹ Doucet, *The Practice Turn in Architecture*, 21-23.

⁴⁰ Reinhold Martin, "Critical of what? Toward a Utopian Realism." *Harvard Design Magazine* 22: 1-5.

⁴¹ Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, "Matters of Care in Technoscience: Assembling Neglected Things," *Social Studies of Science* 41, no. 1 (2011): 85-106.

⁴² Puig de la Bellacasa, "Matters of Care in Technoscience," 89.

which has always confronted the project of participation: How can anyone really know what another needs?⁴³ This problem is made more complicated by the fact that what we desire and what we need are often entirely different. In caring for another we need ‘to determine for the other the need of the other, in place of the other as a service to the other’.⁴⁴ Here the notion of critical care underlines the complicated and conflicted task at the heart of any participatory practice.

The notion of *Dingpolitik* allows us to move from absolutist models of criticality and projectivity, in which unseen forces of dominance must be perpetually guarded against or unequivocally accepted, toward a more localised study of reality. Thinking simultaneously about the objects of architecture, from drawings to buildings, and their manifold relationships, provides a mechanism by which to examine the intricacies of each situation in which architecture is called to intervene. By adding an emphasis on critical care, we begin to sketch a way for architects to not only analyse the entanglements of their products but to intentionally work within and through them, designing relational systems at the same time as the objects which emerge from them. The question, however, remains: How can this more nuanced understanding of critical care be put into practice within participatory architecture? What form could it take?

Utopia as Critical Practice

In his article for the *Harvard Design Review*, Reinhold Martin decried the ‘post-critical’ debate for attempting to neuter the already largely depoliticised ‘critical’ architecture of Eisenman and Hays.⁴⁵ He posited a new conception to replace critical architecture, a hidden movement, that of ‘utopian realism’. Here, the political and critical aspects of earlier Utopian movements in architecture return, but with their feet now firmly planted on the ground. Martin’s article, published only months before De Carlo’s death, makes no mention of the Italian architect or his notion of the realistic utopia. The name Martin gives his notion is a riff on the title of the previous issue of the *Harvard Design Review*, ‘Realism and Utopianism’. Yet, despite the absence of a stated or presumed link to De Carlo, Martin describes his concept in similar terms as a mode of criticality: ‘It is utopian not because it dreams impossible dreams, but because it recognizes ‘reality’ itself as—precisely—an

⁴³ Jan Verwoert, “Personal Support: How to Care,” introduction to *Support Structures* by Céline Condorelli (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009). 167-8.

⁴⁴ Verwoert, “Personal Support: How to Care,” 168.

⁴⁵ Martin, “Critical of What? Toward a Utopian Realism,” 1-5. Martin was directly responding to George Baird’s “Criticality and its Discontents” in the previous issue of the same journal titled “Realism and Utopianism.”

all-too-real dream enforced by those who prefer to accept a destructive and oppressive status quo'.⁴⁶ That utopia is ultimately a form of critique of the situation in which it is generated is not a novel idea. The American philosopher Frederic Jameson highlighted the critical function of utopia as perhaps its only viable purpose: 'at best Utopia can serve the negative purpose of making us more aware of our mental and ideological imprisonment... therefore the best Utopias are those that fail the most comprehensively'.⁴⁷ For Martin, as for De Carlo, utopia can do better than simply fail. It is crucial here to understand it as a two-fold operation. Utopian realism simultaneously critiques the status quo and proposes an alternative to it.

Utopia is widely understood as an exercise in imagining a state other than our own. As theorist Ana Jeinic has suggested, this links utopian and architectural practices as both are concerned with envisioning future places not yet realised. The architectural project is in some ways a miniature of the utopia, a projection of something to come. Utopia is also used to describe a particular sub-genre of speculative architectural project, generally not commissioned nor immediately realisable.⁴⁸ There remains, however, a vagueness about the content of such projects: does it cover all speculative projects, including student work, technological explorations and works of fantasy?⁴⁹ Architectural scholar Nathaniel Coleman has sought to articulate a clearer notion of what properly constitutes utopian practices of architecture. For Coleman, this does not lie in what he considers the more common understanding of utopian architecture as somehow visionary by virtue of its novelty. Rather, the utopian dimension lies in its detailed and precise relationship to the social and political context and the articulation of proposed changes within that context.⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Christina Contandriopoulos cites George Collins, the curator of the 1979 MoMa exhibition *Visionary Projects of the 20th Century*, who differentiates between the 'utopian' schemes of the 19th century, which foregrounded social change, and the 'visionary' projects of the 20th century in which 'technological, aesthetic, poetic, futuristic' concerns had displaced overtly social ones.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Martin, "Critical of What?" 5.

⁴⁷ Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2007), xiii.

⁴⁸ A key work in this regard was Otakar Máčel and Martin Van Schaik, eds. *Exit Utopia: Architectural provocations 1956-1976* (Munich: Prestel, 2005).

⁴⁹ Christina Contandriopoulos, "Architecture and Utopia in the 21st-Century," *Journal of Architectural Education* 67, no. 1 (2013): 3-6.

⁵⁰ Nathaniel Coleman, "Recovering Utopia," *Journal of Architectural Education* 67, no. 1 (2013): 24-26.

⁵¹ Contandriopoulos, "Architecture and Utopia in the 21st-Century," 4.

If the many divergent reactions within architecture against modernism had anything in common, it was a total rejection of utopia⁵² The term utopia in architecture had, by the end of the 20th century, taken on a somewhat contradictory character, at once dangerous for its authoritarian potential and useless in its failure to achieve its aims. Utopias were hereby defined by their utter lack of realism. This made them both a waste of time, as they cannot be enacted or, on the rare occasion of their enactment, extremely dangerous because of their poor grasp on reality. The rejection of utopia was particularly acute in the search for more democratic forms of design and city-making: the architect as lone genius producing visions of what was ‘best’ for others constituted the antithesis of participatory practice.

Discourse on utopia in architecture has focussed on locating and critiquing the utopianism of the modern movement as a central reason for its supposed failures.⁵³ This normative understanding of utopia has begun to be problematised, with scholars such as Coleman seeking more nuanced understandings of the role of utopian practice in architecture.⁵⁴ Histories of the ‘bad’ utopias in architecture, exemplified by post-war mass housing and reconstruction, have been reconsidered and contested. The supposed ‘death’ of modernism with the destruction of the Pruitt-Igoe building in 1972 is a case in point.⁵⁵

As discussed in Chapter 5, the conditions of neoliberalism pose particular problems for participatory architecture to maintain criticality in practice. Ana Jenic addresses the question of whether it is possible for architecture to formulate alternatives to the neoliberal condition.⁵⁶ As Jenic writes, the dominance of neoliberalism today can in some respects be understood as a

⁵² This notion is extensively explored in Reinhold Martin, *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

⁵³ Colin Rowe's work, and his drawing of Karl Popper's critique of utopianism, has been particularly influential in this regard. See Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter. *Collage City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978).

⁵⁴ See for example Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture*. and Nathaniel Coleman, ed., *Imagining and Making the World: Reconsidering Architecture and Utopia* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011).

⁵⁵ See for example Sabine Horlitz, “The Construction of a Blast: The 1970s Urban Crisis and the Demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe Public Housing Complex,” in *Crisis, Rupture and Anxiety: An Interdisciplinary Examination of Historical and Contemporary Human Challenges* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 16-38. In 1978 De Carlo made his own commentary on the claims of the death of modernism: ‘As far as death is concerned, we should remember that it occurred long before the time established by the many journalists now interested in the case. The Modern Movement died when silence was imposed on Tatlin when he designed an ornithopter, when Le Corbusier wrote a letter to Mussolini, when lofan won the competition for the Palace of the Soviets in Moscow, when Rietveld built his first chair, when the drawings of the Chapel at Ronchamp were published, when the conclusions of the Congress of Dubrovnik were drawn up, when Gropius built the Pan-Am Building, when the CIAM was disbanded at Otterlo, when the Lincoln Center was opened, when Premier Pompidou gave way to the operations at La Defence, and so on, and so forth.’ Giancarlo De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture; The Inaugural Thomas Cubitt Lecture* (London: The Thomas Cubitt Trust, 1978), 7.

⁵⁶ Ana Jeinić, "Neoliberalism and the Crisis of the Project... in Architecture and Beyond." in *Is There (Anti-)Neoliberal Architecture?*, ed. Ana Jeinić and Anselm Wagner (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2013), 64-77.

reaction to the brutal consequences of utopias-gone-wrong. With the advent of neoliberalism, the 20th century's devastating contest between competing visions for society had been pleasantly replaced by a kind of calm consensus. All the horror could be avoided if we just let everyone do their own thing, especially in the economy. In this way, neoliberalism can be understood as a kind of anti-utopia. As Jeinic notes, neoliberalism is of course a kind of utopia itself, albeit one which fits Henri Lefebvre's description of the 'worst' utopianism, 'which does not utter its name, covers itself with positivism and on this basis imposes the harshest constraints'.⁵⁷ The problem, as Jeinic and others point out, is that there is no more contest; no alternative model is imaginable.

It is for this reason that Jeinic sees potential in rehabilitating the utopian project in architecture, to begin to imagine alternatives once more. More recently, Britt Eversole has similarly positioned the production of utopias as an antidote to the narratives of right wing populism.⁵⁸ Eversole uses the work of Nadia Urbanati and refers directly to De Carlo in his appeal: 'What previous generations of architect's understood – Bakema, De Carlo and van Eyck – is that the time of action, the present must be flooded with a reservoir of images and models of difference and alterity'.⁵⁹ The provision and articulation of alternatives is, therefore, crucial. Returning to De Carlo, Eversole locates this precisely as the job of the architect:

to ignite the collective imagination by revealing the precariousness of the existing condition and providing images - as a hypothesis of a work that can involve himself and others - of what a different condition could be.⁶⁰

In her 2007 discussion of the possibility for criticality in architecture, Hilde Heynen articulates a model that identifies a space for the creation of such critical images.⁶¹ Heynen describes a necessary precondition for criticality as an 'autonomous moment', the moment of design, of withdrawal, of speculation. For Heynen, it is this moment of autonomy that allows critical questions to be asked,

⁵⁷ Henri Lefebvre, "The Right to the City (1968)", in *Henri Lefebvre: Writing on Cities*, eds. E. Kofman and E. Lebas, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 147–159. While not a focus of this thesis, further links could be drawn between the work of De Carlo and Lefebvre. The two were connected in a somewhat tangential way when De Carlo took on the journal *Spazio e società* in 1978. Prior to this, the journal had been a direct translation of Lefebvre and Anatole Kopp's French journal *Espaces et Sociétés*. Isabella Daidone has written on this development of De Carlo's ideas through the journal. Isabella Daidone, *SPAZIO E SOCIETÀ: Giancarlo De Carlo e il tema della base sociale dell'architettura* (PhD diss. Università degli Studi di Palermo, 2012).

⁵⁸ Britt Eversole, "Populism and Regressive Utopia, Again and Again," *Project 6* (Spring 2017): 55.

⁵⁹ Eversole, "Populism and Regressive Utopia," 55.

⁶⁰ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Altri appunti sulla partecipazione," *Parametro* 52 (1976): 53.

⁶¹ Hilde Heynen, "A Critical Position for Architecture," in *Critical Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), 49.

such as, 'Who is building and for whom?' and 'Who will profit?'.⁶² This moment is illustrated in Figure 6.6.⁶³

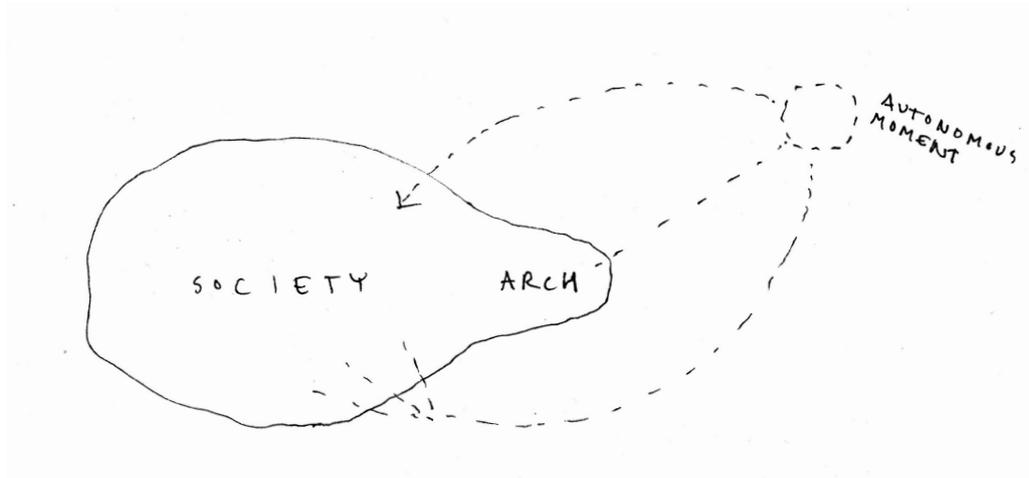


Figure 6.6. According to Hilde Heynen, although architecture is completely dependent on the power structures of society, the design process contains a 'moment' for autonomy which can be used to critique the status quo.

⁶² Heynen, "A Critical Position for Architecture," 49.

⁶³ This play between engagement and retreat is also present in the work of Jeremy Till on transformative participation. In exploring a figure to overcome the false dichotomy between 'community' and 'traditional' architecture, Till proposed the model of 'angels with dirty faces'. This figure was grounded by engagement with the 'dirty' realities of the world, and all the conflicts this entailed. Yet this figure was in perpetual motion, between engagement and retreat. Retreat was crucial for Till as it allowed space for some alternative to be formulated. Autonomy and proximity are here seen as mutually supportive in the operation of critique. Till, "Architecture of the impure community," 62-75.

Writing earlier in 2003, Heynen drew together the histories of participatory and critical-visionary tendencies in architecture by recounting the apparent demise of each.⁶⁴ According to Heynen, participation had faded away due to the ‘insipid’ results of following users’ ‘uninspiring demands’. A simplified form of participation had neutralised the very urban struggles from which it had emerged as a more radical strategy. Standardised procedures for public consultation were established, offering enough information to placate mass movements without ceding any real decision-making power. Visionary architecture, on the other hand, was never able to transcend its position as critical image, commenting from the margins and largely ignored. Its revolutionary fervour became neutralised through its commodification as an ‘innocent’ work of art.⁶⁵ For Heynen, both tendencies suffered from a perceived lack of efficacy in achieving their claims as well as their partial absorption into the systems they sought to critique. While each tendency had been drained of its transformative vitality, Heynen saw the possibility of a resuscitation being enacted by combining the viable elements of the two: ‘To avoid the traps that have meant the end of the ideals of participation and visionary architecture, a sort of hybridisation between the two attitudes ought to take place’.⁶⁶ Heynen describes this as a theoretical potential rather than a concrete tendency and does not offer specific examples of this kind of hybridisation. Yet, as this thesis will argue, at the time she was writing many forms were emerging that brought together aspects of both participatory and visionary architecture.

Earlier, the geographer David Harvey had categorised utopias into those which constructed perfect, stable spatial forms and those which emphasised the mechanics of a perfected social process.⁶⁷ For Harvey, both forms contained weaknesses. Utopias of spatial form (More’s Utopia) created an artificial closure, one which was unable to operate within the dynamics of inevitable change. These utopias have failed not only because of problems in the spatial form itself but also—and particularly—in the social processes mobilised in order to realise them. If More’s utopia identifies a place removed the dynamics of time and process, in Marx Harvey finds the opposite, a utopia of social process bound to no particular place. The problem here is also the opposite, that of never finding a closure. Harvey’s suggestion was, therefore, to seek another kind of hybrid, a utopian form able to incorporate both of these tendencies: a ‘dialectical utopianism’ that is

⁶⁴ Heynen, “Intervention in the Relations of Production,”

⁶⁵ Links to Heynen’s interest in the positions of Benjamin and Adorno. This description resonates with De Carlo’s initial critique of ‘visionary’ architecture: ‘As a result they prefer to concentrate on drawings, working on them to produce art pieces that cannot be reproduced, manipulating them to make them as uncommunicative as possible, and finally putting them on sale in art galleries. In this way consumption is sublimated, by putting language on the market in its pure state.’ De Carlo, *Reflections on the Present State of Architecture*, 10.

⁶⁶ Heynen, “Intervention in the Relations of Production,” 46.

⁶⁷ David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

‘explicitly spatiotemporal’.⁶⁸ As elaborated below, such hybridisation of utopias of form and process can be seen in the same set of practices which, in Heynen’s terms, combine elements of the visionary and the participatory.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, 182.

⁶⁹ As Lee Stickells has noted, the practices which began to emerge in the first decade of the 21st century reveal a clear anxiety about the role of architecture, specifically framed in terms of the distinction between process-oriented and formalist approaches. Lee Stickells, "The Right to the City: Rethinking Architecture's Social Significance," *Architectural Theory Review* 16, no. 3 (2011): 221. The examples Stickells uses to illustrate the different approaches are Caracas Urban Think Tank (UTT), arguing for the former, and Pier Vittorio Aureli, arguing for the latter. The position of UTT quoted by Stickells—that architecture should shift from ‘form-orientated to process-driven’—is emblematic of the attitudes of the similar ‘activist architects’ at the time.

Propositional-critique and Relational-objects in Participatory Architecture Today

In the previous chapter I briefly introduced a set of projects and practices which, while diverse in format and location, have been viewed collectively as a return to the ideas of participation as advocated by De Carlo and others 30 years earlier. Here I argue that, within some of these practices, speculative and visionary forms are used to prefigure or enact their models of participation. There are many earlier examples of projects which can be seen to incorporate aspects of participatory concerns and the format of visionary schemes. Visionary schemes such as Le Corbusier's *Plan Obus*, Yona Freidman's *Ville Spatial*, and Constant Nieuwenhuys's *New Babylon* were, in very different ways, attempts to outline architectural frameworks through which residents and users could construct their own way of living. The *Counter-projects* of Maurice Culot and Leon Krier provide an important precedent for attempts to produce visionary architectural schemes through a process of citizen participation.⁷⁰

In this chapter, the focus is on projects which have been undertaken over the last two decades. I argue that they reveal a distinct approach to combining aspects of visionary and participatory projects through their close attention to the realities of their locations and the groups of people for whom they are intended. In this regard, they integrate the notion of utopia as a form of propositional-critique with *dingpolitik* as a notion of relational-objects.

In these projects, the objects of design become sites to critically examine the social, political and financial relationships in which each is embedded and produced. As such, the objects of design serve a dual purpose of proposition and critique or, in De Carlo's terms, 'shedding light at the same time on a condition of abuse and a prospect of progress'.⁷¹ Such positioning of a project between proposition and critique can be found in the 1998 work *ParaSITE* by architecturally-trained artist Michael Rakowitz. Developed in dialogue with a number of homeless individuals and couples in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the work consists of a series of inflatable structures which can plug into the exhaust vents of existing buildings, as illustrated in Figure 6.7.

⁷⁰ A detailed history of the *Counter-projects* is provided by Doucet, *The Practice Turn in Architecture: Brussels after 1968*, 39-78.

⁷¹ De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 11.

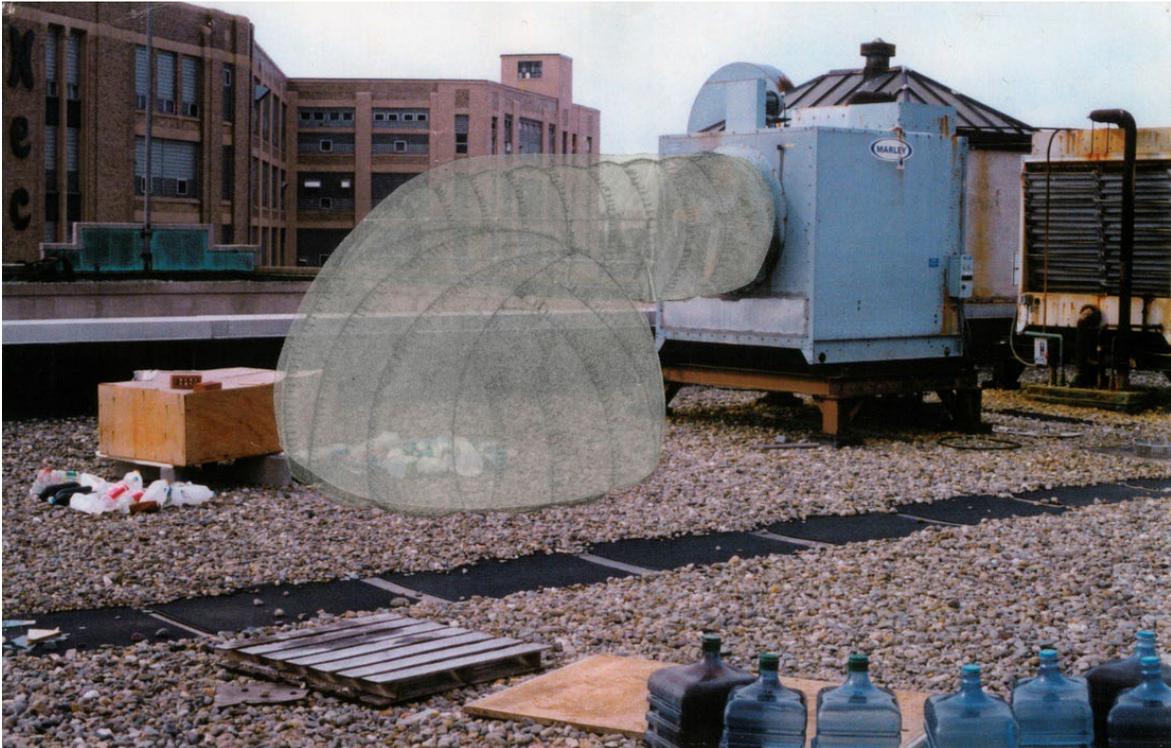


Figure 6.7. Conceptual image of ParaSITE. Image by Michael Rakowitz.

Source: <http://www.michaelrakowitz.com/parasite>

The work, formally reminiscent of the utopian inflatables of the 1960s French group Utopie, amongst others, was intended as a shelter for homeless people. The shelters are pragmatically designed to be warm, dry and portable. They make use of cheap and available materials, consisting only of plastic bags and tape. The work could be seen simply as an attempt to ameliorate the worse effects of the homeless condition, yet is more complex than this. Rakowitz did not position the work as a ‘solution’ to the problem of homelessness, instead stressing its critical potential and noting that several of his homeless collaborators saw the project as an apparatus for protest rather than shelter.⁷² The work is able to make visible the simultaneous presence of homeless people and energy wasted by the people who do have homes, by tying the two phenomena together.⁷³

⁷² Michael Rakowitz, "ParaSITE," in *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*, ed. Jonathan Hughes and Simon Sadler (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000), 232-235.

⁷³ See the entry on ‘Artists and Spatial Practice’ in Awan, Schneider and Till, *Spatial Agency*, 100-101.

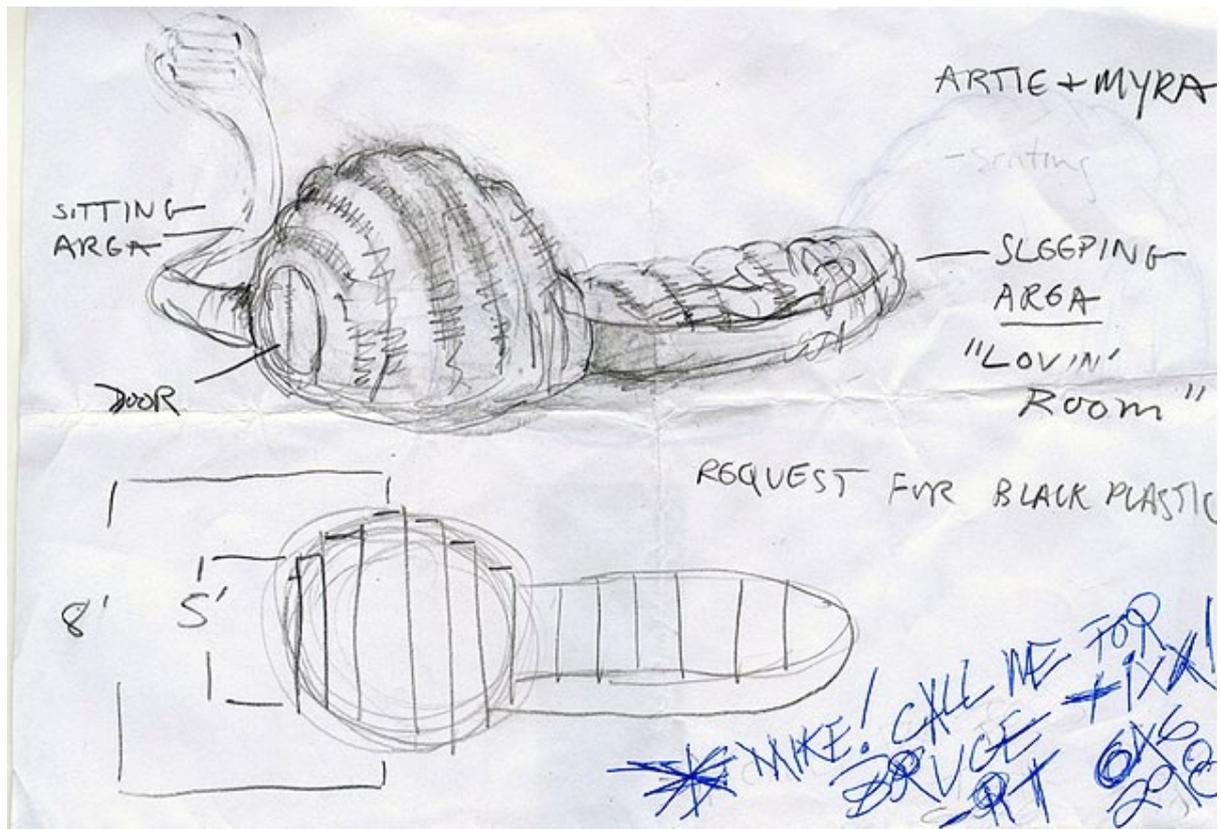


Figure 6.8 Design concepts for Artie's paraSITE. Image by Michael Rakowitz. Source: <https://archinect.com/features/article/149944931/parasite-the-bandage-over-the-nomadic-wound>

The design was tailored to individuals and was modified in consultation with them (see Figure 6.8). Rakowitz originally imagined black plastic as the ideal material for privacy, but soon learned that most of his collaborators preferred a clear plastic for safety and visibility. This combination of the lightness and optimism of the inflatables movement with the harsh realities of physical abuse and freezing conditions on the streets of urban America reflects the critical potential of the utopian form in a very particular way.

for the pedestrian, paraSITE functioned as an agitational device. The visibly parasitic relationship of these devices to the buildings, appropriating a readily available situation with readily available materials, eliciting immediate speculation as to the future of the city:⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Rakowitz, "ParaSITE," 235.



Figure 6.9. Public encounters with a ParaSITE. Photo by Michael Rakowitz.

Source: <http://www.michaelrakowitz.com/parasite>

The work takes an existing set of conditions and materials and constructs a new relationship between them. Rather than adding something new to the situation, it rearranges the existing elements. The resulting project hovers between utopian critique and serious proposition. It manages to be somewhat useful by making life slightly more comfortable in the short term for a limited number, while simultaneously inviting those who encounter it to engage with the much larger problems into which it is intervening.

Utopias of Participation: The Critical-Propositional Images of Teddy Cruz And Dogma

A somewhat similar dynamic of propositional critique can be observed in Teddy Cruz's *Manufactured Sites* project, which was introduced in Chapter 5. The project exposes and explores the exploitation at play in the relational setup of the *maquiladora* phenomenon, highlighted in Figure 6.10, while simultaneously providing a specific *maquiladora* with a readily achievable way to redeem itself. The critical reading of the situation is folded into a detailed and realistic Public Relations solution. As such, the project is ambiguous. It can function equally as a 'paper architecture' critique,

exposing the inequities of the *maquiladoras* within a system of free trade without free movement, and as a genuine blueprint for change, a reformist proposal aimed to benefit both the *maquiladoras* and their workers.

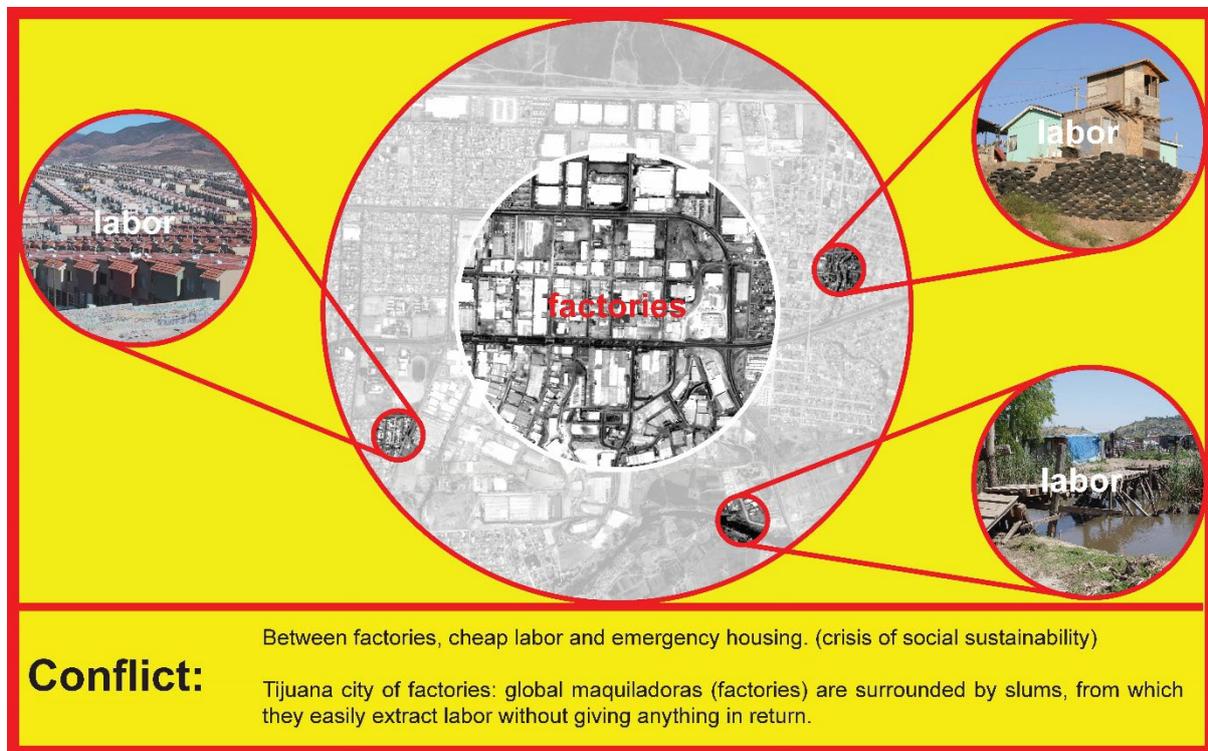


Figure 6.10. Presentation slide developed as part of the *Manufactured Sites* project. Image courtesy of Estudio Teddy Cruz, 2007.

The specificity of the elements is integral to both the critical and propositional dimensions. The construction is not a set of generic, ready-mades available from a local hardware store. They are a specific branded system manufactured by a specific company, Mecalux. Mecalux is not any company, but one amongst many other *maquiladoras* that have situated their manufacturing operations in Tijuana to take advantage of the lower wages and relatively lax labour laws. The precarious settlements which surround the *maquiladora* provide the work force for the production of goods transported via NAFTA to the more affluent consumers of the USA. Where an indirect relationship of exploitation is already present, Cruz highlights this by proposing an alternative, direct relationship of generosity whereby Mecalux would donate their system to provide structural support to the homes of its workers, as illustrated in Figure 6.11.



Figure 6.11. Presentation slide developed as part of the *Manufactured Sites* project. Image courtesy of Estudio Teddy Cruz, 2007.

A relational dynamic is established which simultaneously activates the critique and problematises the solution. A project which critically mapped the issue of exploitation would remain static and limited in its interest, as would a project which solely proposed a flexible system for providing structural support to the dwellings. The critique would not be able to go beyond the reality. The solution would not be able to go beyond a misplaced attempt at amelioration. The real value of the ‘solution’ proposed by Cruz lies in its attempt to tie together the two relational phenomena of Tijuana: the masses of northward-bound migrants, semi-permanently stopped at the border, and the easy exploitation of these people by the North. Referenced in this constellation is the easy flow of goods and capital, but not people. It is the specific location of the project which is crucial here. Mecalux providing their system to informal settlers in Manila would not carry any critical potential. Nor would an intervention designed around a system fabricated in Germany.

The readings of BAVO and others dismiss any possibility for the manufactured sites project to be critical because of its incorporation of the ‘market-player’ in the proposed solution. Cruz, however, has sought to frame a form of critique which is not explicitly oppositional but, rather, seeks to

effect change through direct engagement in ‘retrofitting institutions’.⁷⁵ Cruz has argued that architecture needs to engage with the political and economic not only as frames for practice but as explicit sites for critical intervention through creative re-formulation. This begins by forming collaborations outside the dominant economic and political interests, then by working with these new constellations of power on projects that both outline the spatial injustices of, for example, discriminatory regulatory frameworks, and create pragmatic alternatives—not only for buildings but also for the social, political and economic processes required to see them materialised. While Cruz seeks the construction of alternatives to current systems of power and control, he recognises the need for close engagement with these systems in order to do so. His proposal is to replace critical distance with a practice of ‘critical proximity’ to the institutions that one is seeking to critique, as illustrated in Figure 6.12.

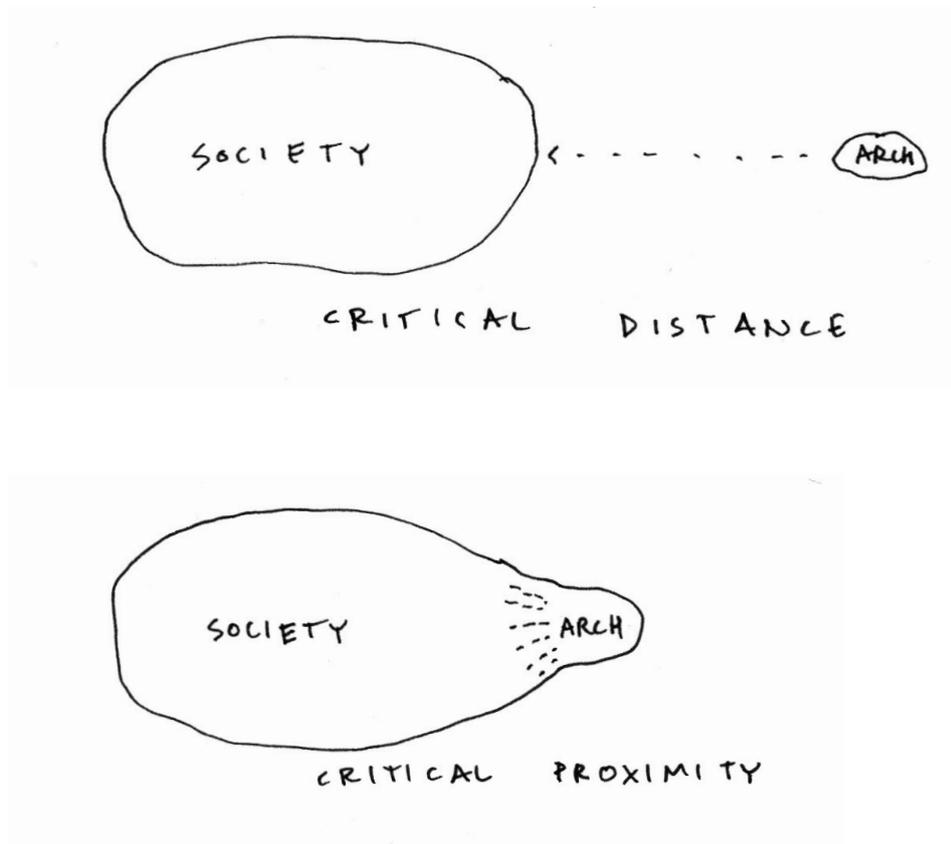


Figure 6.12. Teddy Cruz locates architecture’s possibility for critique in the relationships of collaboration and conflict with organisations and institutions at the immediate level of the project.

75 Teddy Cruz, “Architecture: Participation, Process, and Negotiation,” in *Verb Crisis* ed. Mario Ballesteros. (Barcelona: Actar, 2008), 150-159.

This mode appears to be present in Fran Tonkiss's account of makeshift urbanism 'which work[s] both under and against current economic and political constraints'.⁷⁶ Similarly, the move from distance to proximity connects with Latour's realisation that 'the mistake I made, was to believe that there was no efficient way to criticize matters of fact except by moving *away* from them'⁷⁷ and to propose a change in 'the direction of critique, not *away* but *toward*'.⁷⁸

Italian architect and theorist Pier Vittorio Aureli has explicitly rejected the kinds of contemporary practices of activist and participatory practices of which Cruz could be seen as an exemplar. For him, these approaches suffer from 'reformist pathology' locked into optimism, aestheticising the informal city, seeing crisis as a chance to be creative and effectively sublimating the crisis's most regressive effects.⁷⁹ Yet in his writings Aureli articulates a position of 'against from within' which in some ways aligns with and extends Cruz's 'critical proximity'. Aureli returns to the concept of autonomy itself, specifically the 'project of autonomy' traced across the political and architectural movements of late 1960s Italy. He brings together Aldo Rossi's *Tendenza*, the Radical Architecture group Archizoom, the Operaist political philosophy of Mario Tronti and the *Autonomia* group of intellectuals. He gathers together these diverse actors and their positions through a common understanding of the kind of autonomy that makes a critical position possible. This position can be defined as 'against from within' capitalism. This was not the kind of autonomy later made famous by architects such as Eisenman. Aureli is careful to specify that autonomy here was 'not a generic claim of autonomy *from*, but a much more audacious and radical claim of autonomy *for*'.⁸⁰ Tronti's understanding of the autonomy of the political is key here: the worker is not simply a victim of capitalism's historical development but, rather, the active force which through struggle forces capitalism's development and evolution. Autonomy here means being able to act. It does not imply having control of the action's effects, only the ability to push forward. Figure 6.13 depicts Aureli's model in which the model of architecture's complicity (as associated with the model drawn from Tafuri, depicted in Figure 6.1) can be re-oriented to operate within-and-against capitalism.

⁷⁶ Tonkiss, "Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City," 323.

⁷⁷ Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?," 231.

⁷⁸ Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?," 246.

⁷⁹ Pier Vittorio Aureli, "The Theology of Tabula Rasa: Walter Benjamin and Architecture in the Age of Precarity," *Log*, no. 27 (2013): 111-112.

⁸⁰ Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and against Capitalism*, vol. 4 (Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 12.

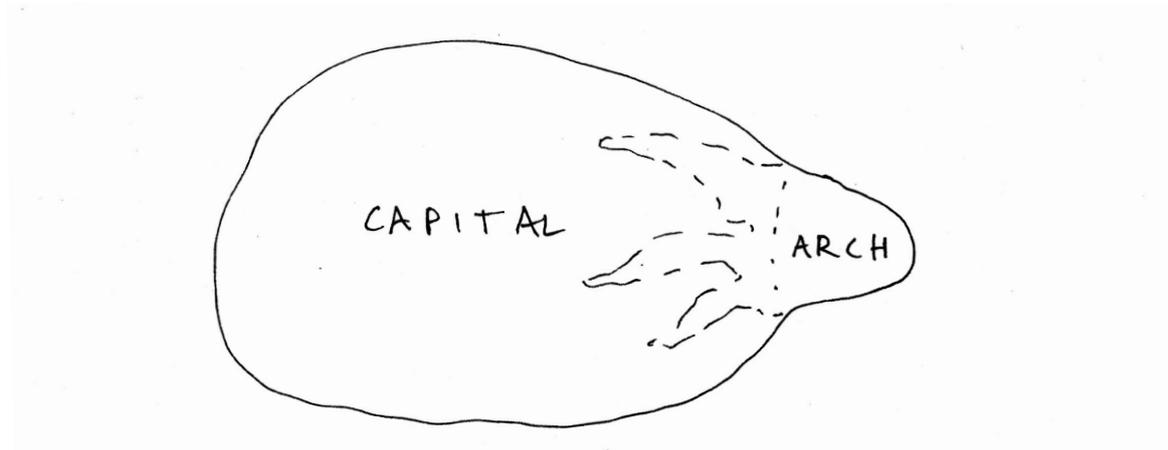


Figure 6.13. Pier Vittorio Aureli's proposed position for architecture to act 'within and against' capitalism suggests that the limited autonomy of architecture allowed by capital can in fact be used in opposition to its aims.

In later work, Aureli attempts to develop this notion of autonomy through closer consideration of the political operations of specific architectural forms that are able to be 'at once an act of radical autonomy from and radical engagement with the forces that characterized the urbanization of cities'.⁸¹ In doing so, he makes use of Oswald Matthias Ungers' concept of the archipelago—a way of proposing alternative ideas about the city through individual projects, formed as examples rather than general plans. This links to the concept of the urban prototype developed by Martino Tattara, Aureli's long-time collaborator in their shared practice, Dogma.⁸² This practice provides a model for such a version of architecture that is critical of the city and directed towards its transformation entirely through the production of speculative architectural images.

Like *Manufactured Sites*, Dogma's projects have generally been produced for exhibition and publication. In their project for the 2013 Tallinn Biennale, *Live Forever*, Dogma created a proposal to resurrect the factory as a form of mass housing. Despite claiming to have no interest in participation, the project confronts from another direction a key problem for participation: the withdrawal of the welfare state from the provision of housing, and its replacement with regimes of flexibility. Belgian writer and architect Christophe Van Gerrewey notes how Dogma has located in this situation a collective which may not recognise itself as such: the modern 'creative' worker who faces a lifetime of precarious arrangements in both housing and work.⁸³ The block containing both living and working spaces becomes a symbol, a way to gather together and identify an

⁸¹ Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), xiii.

⁸² Martino Tattara, "Brasilia's Superquadra: Prototypical Design and the Project of the City," *Architectural Design* 81, no. 1 (2011): 46-55.

⁸³ Christophe van Gerrewey, "How Soon Is Now? Ten Problems and Paradoxes in the Work of Dogma," *Log*, no. 35 (2015): 33.

otherwise atomised group of political actors (Figure 6.14). As such, the proposal can be seen as kind of intentional *Dingpolitik* by designing a ‘missing’ object to unite a group of people connected by circumstance.

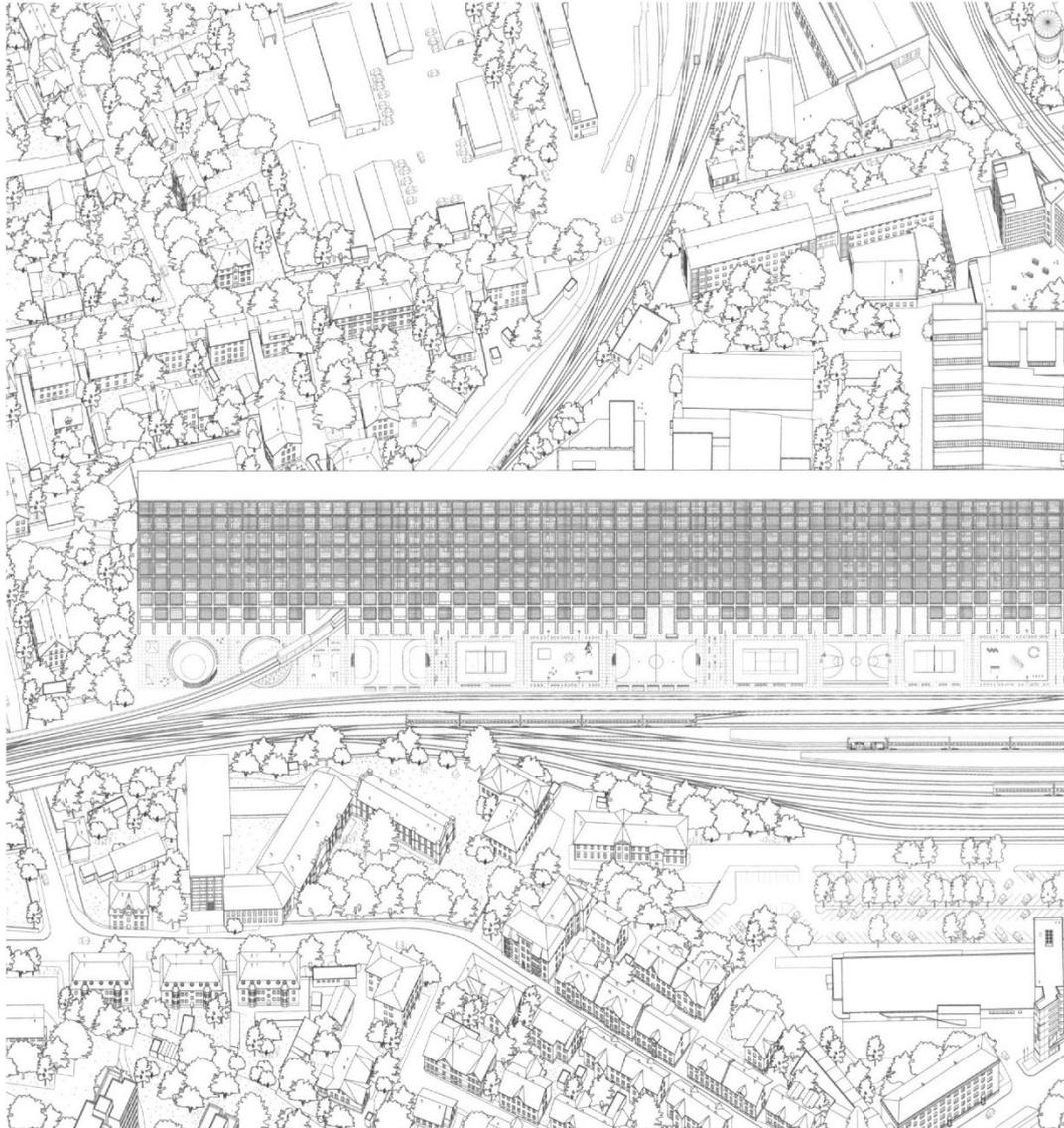


Figure 6.14. A new urban object to gather an unseen collective. Dogma's *Live Forever*. Source: Christophe Van Gerrewey, "How Soon Is Now? Ten Problems and Paradoxes in the Work of Dogma." *Log*, no. 35 (2015): 30

Van Gerrewey describes how ‘by reflecting back a part of the world through the mirror of architectural form, the inhabitants of this world and of this architecture will be able to see not only what is happening to them but also how it could be changed’.⁸⁴ The criticality of Dogma’s work lies in the dissonance created between their proposition and the existing reality. Despite the differences in location and fictionalised client group, as well as in the style and rhetoric of their proposals, Dogma’s work can in this way be linked to that of Cruz as a way of bringing both a critique and a proposition into a mutually supportive format.

In 2015, Dogma continued to explore new forms of collective housing for creative workers, who had gone from agents of gentrification to the new displaced, through the project *Communal Villa*, produced with the Berlin-based collective Realism Working Group.⁸⁵ Whereas *Live Forever* was directed towards an unseen collective, *Communal Villa* was designed for a model of legal and financial collectivism already being enacted by a very real assemblage of dwellers, the *Mietshäuser Syndikat*. The *Mietshäuser Syndikat* (MS), roughly translated as ‘Syndicate of Tenements’, was founded in 1992 as an association with a unique legal structure aimed explicitly at removing housing from the speculative housing market.⁸⁶ Each of its housing projects across Germany is owned by a particular legal assemblage: 50% by one limited liability company (LLC) comprised solely of the tenants of that specific project and the other 50% by another LLC comprised of all MS housing projects. Under this structure, a particular project cannot be on-sold for profit without the approval of all other MS properties—a nearly impossible outcome.⁸⁷ The structure thus creates a permanent piece of common property by ‘hacking’ the standard tools of private property.⁸⁸ Berlin architect and former member of *An Architektur*, Sabine Horlitz, has traced the need for such a mechanism to the failure of earlier experiments with formalised squatting and other co-housing types, such as the *Baugruppen*, which remained fragile and were often dissolved back into the speculative property market.⁸⁹ While its focus is entirely on the legal and financial, rather than formal or symbolic aspects of housing, *Mietshäuser Syndikat* can be understood as an

⁸⁴ Van Gerrewey “How Soon Is Now?,” 33.

⁸⁵ Dogma and Realism Working Group, *Communal Villa: Production and Reproduction in Artists’ Housing, Wohnungsfrage* (Leipzig: Spector, 2015). The *Wohnungsfrage* was an exhibition and publication series at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in 2015, aimed at revisiting Friedrich Engel’s famous *Housing Question*. The central component of the series was the pairing of a Berlin-based and international group to explore the contemporary questions of housing. Teddy Cruz was also a participant in a team with Kotti + Co.

⁸⁶ Robert Burghardt, “Perspectives for a Realist Practice: Architecture in a Syndicate of Tenements,” in *Communal Villa: Production and Reproduction in Artists’ Housing: Wohnungsfrage* (Leipzig: Spector, 2015), 81-92.

⁸⁷ Kristien Ring, *Self Made City* (Berlin: Jovis, 2013), 33.

⁸⁸ The term ‘hack’ is taken from Burghardt, “Perspectives for a Realist Practice: Architecture in a Syndicate of Tenements,” 8

⁸⁹ Sabine Horlitz, “Movements and Initiatives to Decommodify Housing,” (Paper presented at Resourceful Cities Conference, TU Berlin, August 2013).

example of operating ‘against from within’ the capitalist system, particularly through its use of the basic module of capitalism (the LLC) to permanently remove houses from the speculative real-estate market.

The project developed by Dogma and their Berlin collaborators, entitled Communal Villa, proposed a speculative architectural form to house the unique social and economic model enabled by the MS. As with *Live Forever*, the departure point is the contemporary relationship of housing and labour, understood in both its productive and reproductive forms. Here, the form is not intended to innovate, but to provide a ‘tangible architectural response to a phenomenon that is already happening: the significant increase of syndicate projects in recent years’.⁹⁰ Just as the MS has used the archetypal structure of private ownership, the Limited Liability Company, to enable collective ownership, the architects seek to mirror that gesture by using the villa— an archetypal celebration of private property and despotic domestic relationships—to facilitate its opposite.

The group presents two models: the square Villa Suburbana and the narrower Villa Urbana. Both are based on the same module, a single cell 7.5m x 7.5m x 5m. In the Villa Suburbana, shown in Figure 6.15, the individual cells occupy the perimeter of a square comprising 5 x 5 modules, with two of the corners providing collective cooking spaces and vertical circulation. The remaining nine modules in the centre of the square are ‘multipurpose’ spaces for labour without hierarchy between artistic, productive and reproductive modes. Internal perspectives, such as those in Figure 6.16 show the central rooms used variously for fabrication, child-care, swimming and feasting. The Villas are to be built predominantly as industrial buildings, supposedly to keep production costs low. The only exception is the ‘inhabitable wall’, a free-standing plywood structure containing a bathroom, storage and sleeping loft with bookshelf (Figure 6.16). This wall separates the collective and individual spaces and contains both individual and communal storage (depending on the side from which it is accessed). An architecture within an architecture, it acts as the border between the internal, common areas and the best and most generous spaces for the individual that occupy the periphery. These spaces are depicted as simultaneously luxurious and egalitarian, with each member of the collective, adult or child, allotted a cell. The Villas, each understood as an autonomous unit, are designed for infinite, identical reproduction and dispersal throughout all vacant land in Berlin, approximating in urban terms the archipelago of resistance enacted by the financial model of the *Syndikat*.

⁹⁰ Dogma and Realism Working Group, “Production, Reproduction, Co-Operation: The Villa from ‘Negative Utopia’ to Communal House,” in *Communal Villa: Production and Reproduction in Artists’ Housing: Wohnungsfrage* (Leipzig: Spector, 2015), 13-31.

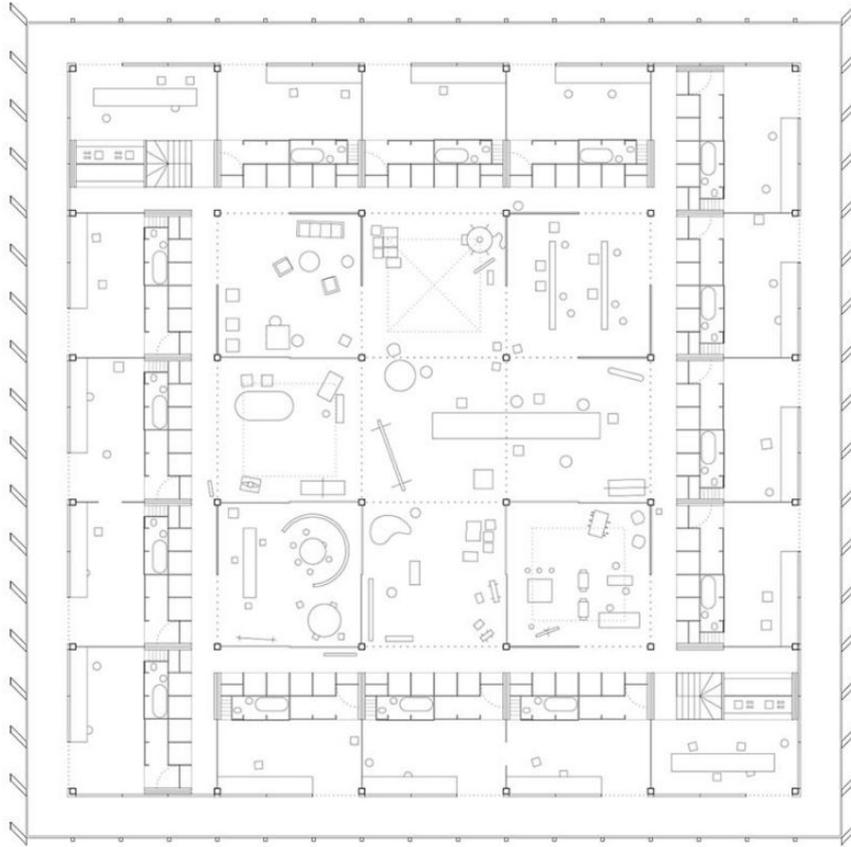


Figure 6.15. Plan of Villa Suburbana. Source: Dogma and Realism Working Group, *Communal Villa: Production and Reproduction in Artists' Housing, Wohnungsfrage* (Leipzig: Spector, 2015), 39.

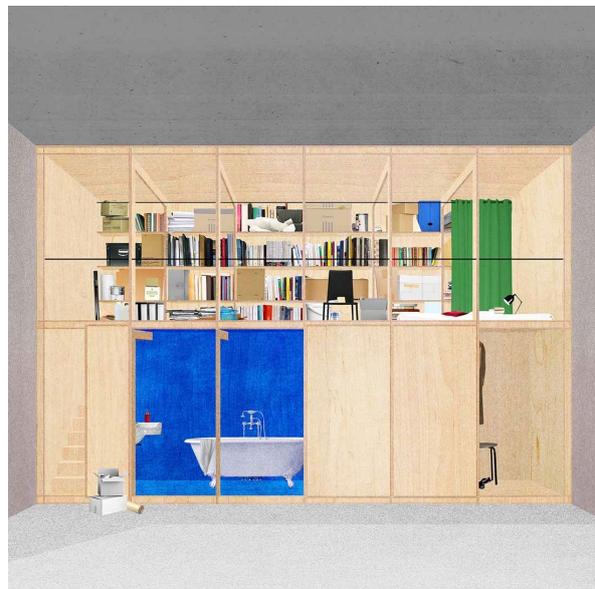


Figure 6.16. Left: Internal perspective of Villa Suburbana. Right: The inhabitable wall. Source: Dogma and Realism Working Group, *Communal Villa*, 52, 7.

It could be argued that Dogma has found in the MS a convenient model to justify their previous formal speculation, developed through *Live Forever*. By aligning themselves to an actual mechanism for enacting their proposal, it becomes dramatically more realisable. Less clear is what benefit the MS obtains from the exercise, as compared to real architectural interventions for MS projects, such as the project *WiLMa19*, designed by by Arge Clemens Krug Architekten + Bernard Hummel, to retrofit a former Stasi office building, to accommodate a diversity of MS households.⁹¹ This design, painstakingly developed through participation with the tenants, was enacted through small interventions, shown as yellow-removal and red-addition in Figure 6.17. The aim was to enable a variety of household types, from collective 12-room dwellings occupying a single floor, to more traditional apartments for nuclear families. The work of the architect here was almost exclusively related to the manipulation of openings between the pre-existing office cells and the corridor (Figure 6.18). While Dogma had proposed a highly regularised system to provide a frame for diverse family arrangements, the work of Clemens Krug et al. reveal what is actually required to transform a highly regularised form into a diversity of tailored housing types.

⁹¹ Niloufar Tajeri and Walter Nægeli, *Small Interventions: New Ways of Living in Post-War Modernism* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2016), 62-73. See also Stefan Gruber, “WiLMa19 Decommodifying Housing by Separating Use Value from Exchange Value,” in *ARCH+ An Atlas of Commoning: Places of Collective Production*, eds. Anh-Linh Ngo, Mirko Gatti, Christian Hiller, Max Kaldenhoff, Christine Rüb, Elke aus dem Moore, Stefan Gruber (Stuttgart: ifa, 2018), 76-79.



Figure 6.17. Plans of *WilMa19*. From top: ground floor with spaces for work and collective use; first floor barrier-free apartment for 12 people and children; fourth floor with a mix of maisonettes, cluster dwelling units and guest apartment. From Tajeri and Nägeli, *Small Interventions*, 66-67.



Figure 6.18. Photo of new opening onto kitchen in *WiLMa19*. From Tajeri and Nägeli, *Small Interventions*, 68.

Both Cruz and Dogma engage (with differing degrees of directness) the social concerns of participation within the format of a speculative vision. These visions set out what needs to be in place in order for participation to occur through self-building or by flexible occupation. Their speculations remain firmly as paper architecture, critical-propositional images. The power and limits of paper architecture in comparison to realised projects are discussed by Kaminer. Paper architecture, free of clients and constraints, is free to speak but limited in respect to what it can achieve in reality. Real projects have the inverse problem, being able to act in the world yet much more limited in what they can critically ‘say’.⁹² Both Cruz and Dogma insulate themselves to some extent by never actually realising any projects. For Cruz, this is something of a liability, his rhetoric suggesting a pressing need to make his projects real. For Dogma, it appears consistent with their declared intention not to build. Van Gerrewey describes Dogma as a hypothetical practice, because they are never able to find clients with the power to commission the radical re-invention of the architecture they propose.⁹³ In discussing the question of efficacy, Van Gerrewey emphasises Dogma’s relationship to their audience. They do not consult, or try ‘to find out modestly or opportunistically what the public wants, [instead] Dogma confronts its audiences with what it

⁹² Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture*, 13.

⁹³ Van Gerrewey, "How Soon Is Now?," 33.

considers their most pressing needs and desires'.⁹⁴ In other words, theirs is a one-way critique that provides no mechanism for feedback. Despite the more participatory aesthetics of Cruz, the same can be said of his projects. By actually *enacting* the alternative vision, as in the *WiLlMa19* project, projects become both more convincing and infinitely more complex in relation to the negotiations that are necessary for its realisation. As discussed below, the utopian form and attention to the relational aspects of objects have a role within these processes.

Participatory Utopias: Park Fiction, Kerstin Bergendal and *atelier d'architecture autogérée*

Other contemporary practices have drawn utopian, speculative and visionary production into actual processes of participation in architecture. These projects can be understood as participatory utopias: projects which engage directly with a group of users and make real objects in dialogue with them through speculative methods. They are embodied utopias, small places and practices in which things are ordered otherwise. As such, they relate to Henri Lefebvre's notion of Concrete Utopias: real places in the world, but which are consciously constructed with utopian intent.⁹⁵ While Cruz and Dogma primarily work through the classic arts platforms of exhibition and publication, these other projects often involve artists involving themselves directly in the built environment. This is related to a broader movement to engage with and through everyday practices.⁹⁶ The British theorist Jane Rendell provides a framework for understanding these hybrid formulations, which she refers to collectively as critical spatial practice.⁹⁷ For Rendell, critical spatial practices are situated between the solution-finding role of architecture and the ability of art to question the terms of engagement. Her formulation can be seen as quite distinct from previous attempts to draw the critical distance of the visual arts into architecture.⁹⁸ The resurgent interest in the political and social relationships embedded in architecture which emerged during the early

⁹⁴ Van Gerrewey "How Soon Is Now?" 33.

⁹⁵ For a discussion on the relationship between heterotopias and the speculative practices of the 21st century see Lieven De Cauter and Michiel Dehaene, "Meditations on Razor Wire," in *Visionary Power: Producing the Contemporary City*, eds. Christine de Baan, Joachim Declerck, Véronique Patteeuw, (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2007), 233-47.

⁹⁶ See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002). The specific role of participation in such practices has been examined by Claire Bishop, "Introduction: Viewers as Producers," in *Participation (Documents of Contemporary Art)*, ed. Claire Bishop (The MIT Press, 2006). and Grant H Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁹⁷ Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London: IB Tauris, 2006). The term has been adopted by others, including Miessen: Nikolaus Hirsch and Markus Miessen, eds., *What is Critical Spatial Practice? Critical Spatial Practice 1*. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012).

⁹⁸ This can be seen in Eisenman's attempts to transfer concepts of autonomy from the conceptual art of Sol LeWitt. as discussed in Kaminer, *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation*, 96.

2000s have many sources, including the relational aesthetics discourse which preceded it in contemporary art.⁹⁹ As a result of this shift, art was no longer commenting from an outsider position; rather, it was an embedded and engaged participant in social action.



Figure 6.19. An image of the park at its inauguration in 2005. Photo by Park Fiction. Source : <https://park-fiction.net/park-fiction-introduction-in-english/>

A frequently cited example of this type is *Park Fiction* (Figure 6.19). In 1994, a group of artists and residents of the St Pauli district in Hamburg began work on a project to combat the effects of gentrification through a creative occupation of land.¹⁰⁰ The project was initiated in response to the planned redevelopment of the last piece of harbourside land as high-rise office space. Rather than protesting, the residents occupied the site for intensive recreational use. This gave birth to the idea of enacting a utopian fiction: that the city would turn the site into a public park for residents' use rather than allowing it to be developed for profit. The artists took this fiction seriously, initiating

⁹⁹ Doina Petrescu makes the link between Nicolas Bourriard's relational aesthetics and her own work as part of aaaa in Doina Petrescu, "Relationscapes: Mapping Agencies of Relational Practice in Architecture," *City, Culture and Society* 3, no. 2 (2012): 135-140.

¹⁰⁰ Nato Thompson, *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (MIT Press, 2012), 200-201.

their own planning process for the development of this park.¹⁰¹ The proponents of the project treated their utopian fiction as if it were fact, not only in planning but by beginning to use it as such (see Figure 6.20). The project was featured in a series of high-profile exhibitions, including Documenta 11 in 2002. By 2005, the city had abandoned its plans to sell the land and, using money from the City's public art fund, the group began to implement the desired improvements, which eventually included an astro-turf flying carpet, a tropical island with plastic palm trees and a topiary 'poodle club'.



Figure 6.20. The use of the park preceded the park itself. Photo by Christophe Schaeffer. Source: <https://christophschaefer.net/cv/>

¹⁰¹ Awan, Schneider and Till, *Spatial Agency*, 181-182.

Relational-objects played a crucial role in the process. First, the site itself acted as a *dingpolitik*, gathering a diverse community of concern around its future. The artists then developed a series of theatrical tools to generate further interest and draw the fictional park's users into more definitive planning discussions (Figure 6.21). These included a planning-process board game, polaroid camera stage set, briefcase design studio and a 'planning-container'— a semi-permanent office, complete with 24hr telephone hotline. The opinions and ambitions elicited through these objects were given their own physical manifestation as the *wunscharchiv* (archive of desires).

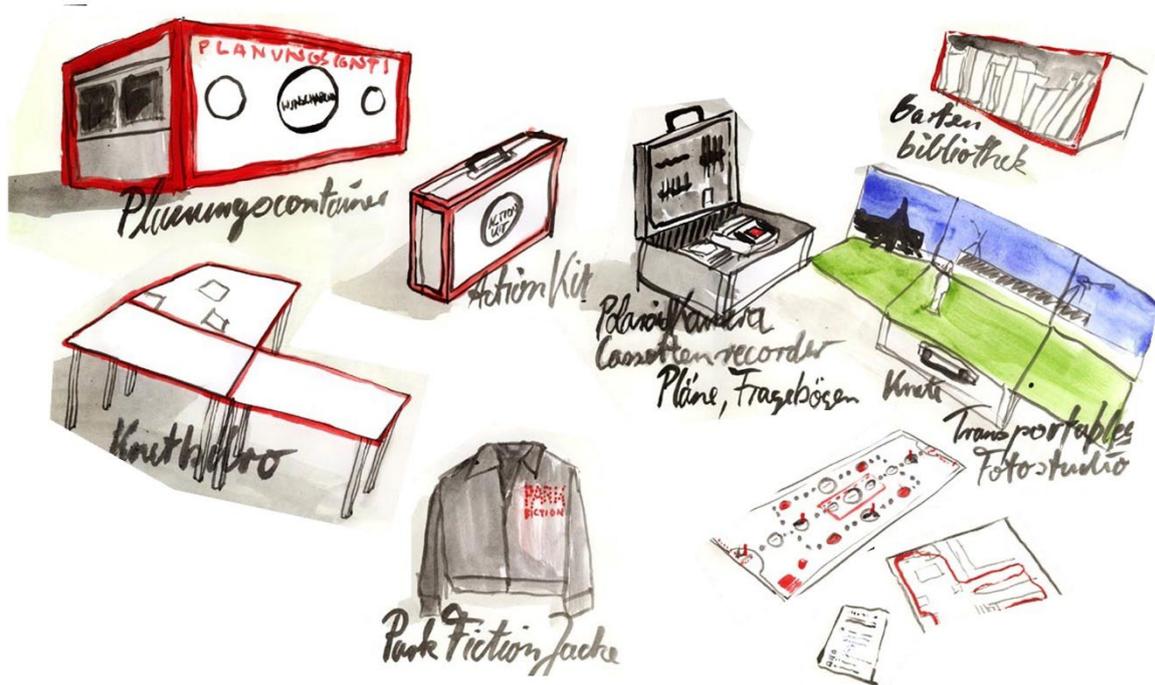


Figure 6.21. A range of planning tools developed through the project. Image by Christophe Schaefer. Source: <https://christophschaefer.net/cv/>

The City of Hamburg now actively promotes the project as a tourist attraction (Figure 6.22).¹⁰² This highlights the fact that the project, while retaining a piece of land for public use, has not shifted the underlying processes of gentrification of St Pauli. This raises the awkward question of what benefit is a public park to a community who can no longer afford to live beside it. In this regard it is worth noting that many of the proponents of *Park Fiction* are now involved in an ongoing participatory planning mechanism, *PlanBude*, which is primarily focused on housing developments in the St Pauli district.¹⁰³



Figure 6.22. Image taken from the City of Hamburg, “Sights: Park Fiction,” accessed 19.02.2019. <https://www.hamburg.com/alternative/11747608/park-fiction/>.

¹⁰² City of Hamburg, “Sights: Park Fiction,” accessed 19.02.2019. <https://www.hamburg.com/alternative/11747608/park-fiction/>.

¹⁰³ Renée Tribble, Lisa Marie Zander, “PlanBude Hamburg: The Process and The Tools, From Desiring-Production to Space,” in *ARCH+ An Atlas of Commoning: Places of Collective Production*, eds. Anh-Linh Ngo, Mirko Gatti, Christian Hiller, Max Kaldenhoff, Christine Rüb, Elke aus dem Moore, Stefan Gruber, (Stuttgart: ifa, 2018), 156-161.

As the authors of *Spatial Agency* point out, the success of *Park Fiction* was contingent on its unique context. The long history of squatting and social advocacy in St Pauli had laid the ground for a vocal, active and creative resident community, able to commit to such an ambitious project.¹⁰⁴ A more recent project by the Swedish artist Kerstin Bergendahl, *Park Play*, shows how this kind of utopian planning process could be enacted in more typical suburban community contexts where experience of urban activism is absent. Like *Park Fiction*, the project evolved through a gathering of interested parties around a real and existing urban space, which eventually resulting in a re-thinking of a developer-led plan. Unlike *Park Fiction*, where the instigators of the project were interested members of the community, Bergendahl was an outsider, an artist undertaking a residency at the local gallery. The community facing redevelopment here was not a neighbourhood of seasoned activists and squatters but, rather, two neighbourhoods without much in common—a leafy, conservative suburb and a cluster of poorly maintained public housing. By intervening in a much more ‘typical’ situation, Bergendahl’s project was able to suggest tools that could be employed more widely.

The *Park Play* project involved one of the few remaining green spaces in Stockholm, in the municipality of Sundbyberg, located between a wealthy commuter suburb and a relatively isolated pocket of social housing. The project evolved slowly, starting with a series of small conversations about parks during Bergendahl’s original residency. These conversations led to funding for a larger project in which Bergendahl would be based in the municipality 10 days each month for a year. Through this long-term engagement, casual conversations led to a series of filmed interviews with residents which in turn generated an alternative planning process, a ‘parliament’, which grew to include representatives from both the government and the property developers (Figure 6.23).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Awan, Schneider, and Till. *Spatial Agency*, 181-182.

¹⁰⁵ Kerstin Bergendahl, "The Park Play Project - A Tale of Accumulative Planning," in *Planning Unplanned: Toward a New Fiction of Art in Society*, ed. Barbara Holb and Christine Hohenbüchler (Vienna: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2015), 94-9. For a discussion of the importance of time in one of Bergendahl’s previous projects see Paul O’Neill and Claire Doherty, *Locating the Producers: Durational Approaches to Public Art* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2011), 129-188.



Figure 6.23. Documentation of a dialogue held in 2012 at Marbouparken. Image by Kerstin Bergendal. Source: <https://kerstinbergendal.com/2012/07/30/the-park-lek-project-2/> accessed 20.07.2021

The context was fragile. The two communities were suspicious of each other and neither wanted any development, while the developer had already been waiting to begin work for 14 years. Bergendal was able to navigate this by treading a careful path between attending to the realities of the situation and creating a space for open and utopian speculation, simultaneously enacting ‘a utopian art project as well as a concrete intervention in the urban planning process’. Bergendal consciously employed the utopian status of the artist and art project to enable more genuine participation. ‘It was thus entirely clear to everyone in the room that this process was part of a visual art project. We were not acting in reality, but in a space *alongside reality*. No hierarchy between the participants was relevant here’.¹⁰⁶ Whereas in the reality of urban development, the desires and opinions of residents, developers, planners and administrators have vastly different levels of influence, within the speculative space created by the artists these desires could be brought together on more equal terms.

¹⁰⁶ Bergendal, "The Park Lek Project" 97.

After creating the dialogical space for all desires to be recognised, Bergendal brought in architects and planners to create images of what some of the utopian speculations could look like within the realities of the development. Bergendal describes the process as ‘running one’s own state of exception, like a soap bubble in which the *actually-equally-possible* can not only be recognised but thoroughly elaborated’. The process becomes two-fold, opening a utopian space in which other possibilities can be freely imagined and then grounding them back into the realities of urban planning. The end result was a plan which managed to increase public space, return a cherished community building and increase the developers’ housing yield by removing a portion of the public road, as shown in Figure 6.24.



Figure 6.24. Right: The original plan agreed by the Municipality and the Developers. Right: The amended plan produced through the *Park Play Parliament*. The yellow areas represent development areas, red areas to be renovated and green designated open space of various types (indicated by shade). Images by Kerstin Bergendal. Source: <http://www.parklek.com/html/about%20parklek.html>



Figure 6.25. The project represented as an overlapping set of process photographs, documents, notes, diagrams and models. Photo by Kerstin Bergendal.. Source: <https://kerstinbergendal.com/2012/07/30/the-park-lek-project-2/>

Across numerous events and spaces, the *Park Play* project gathered a community of concern; including municipality, developers, wealthy suburbanites and public housing tenants with the development plan as a kind of *Dingpolitik* at its centre (Figure 6.25). Operating in such an explicitly relational way, the process recognised the complex intersection of needs of all actors involved including those of the developer. This presented clear difficulties in terms of remaining critical. ‘No matter how this was done I would have to get my hands dirty. The project would act as an instrument for the town administration, and thus indirectly for the builders.’ Bergendal consciously chose to become ‘instrumentalised’ by the powerful actors involved. She sacrificed the pure position of critical outsider to enable some tangible benefits for everyone. The utopian figure of the artist herself became a secondary ‘object’ around which she could gather the same actors to discuss in utopian terms the possibilities of the project. The key enabler for the success of the project can be defined in terms of critical care.¹⁰⁷ Part of this was reflected in the length of time involved and the repetitive, durational nature of the work. Equally important was the attention she brought to a kind of shared responsibility, whereby each was tasked with caring for the desires of the other.

¹⁰⁷ Bergendal has described this in terms of care-work as ‘a female strategy for intervention: mounting mental communality just by knitting relations between the residents.’ Bergendal, “The Park Lek Project” 98.

The relational aspect of the objects of utopian speculation in projects of participatory architecture can be drawn out somewhat differently by returning to the projects of the Paris-based practice *atelier d'architecture autogérée* (aaa), which was introduced in Chapter 5. Here the *Dingpolitik* is miniaturised in each material object, which gathers interested parties and opens itself to replacement by other more suitable forms. In this way an explicitly utopian mode of *process* connected to these objects can be observed. Their *ECObox* projects uncovered and identified a set of desires, and a related object—a garden bed, a map, a portable kitchen, a meeting room, an event—was quickly constructed. These objects were then tested and, if successful, generated further speculative objects. Describing these iterative processes becomes a major part of the group's representation of their projects, as can be seen in their diagrams. For example, Figure 6.26 shows three stages in the development of the project *Passage 56*. It begins with some of the mobile elements from the *ECObox* project, a canopy, some bits and pieces of furniture, a series of 'desires' pinned to a string across the site. Over the following two stages, more permanent elements are built: a green house, toilets and a meeting room raised above the entrance.

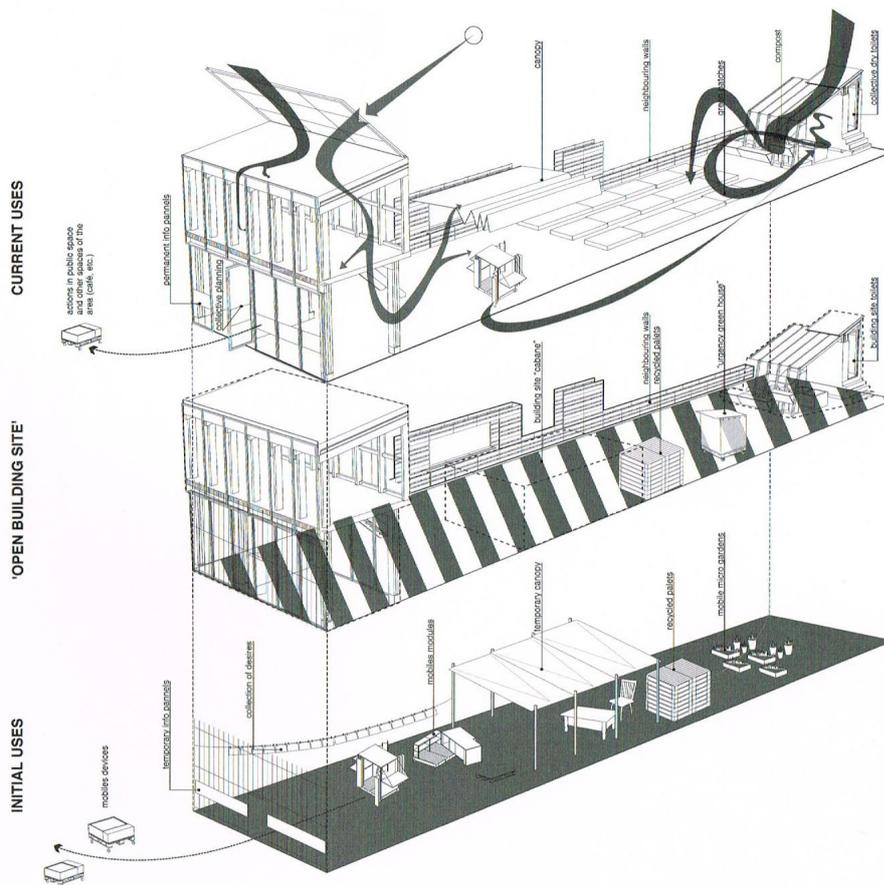


Figure 6.26. Process diagram depicting several stages of incremental programmatic and physical transformation of Passage 56 by *atelier d'architecture autogérée* (aaa - studio for self-managed architecture). Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu. From Lukas Feireiss and Ole Bouman, *Testify!: the Consequences of Architecture* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2011), 100.

While the projects produce material buildings, furniture and spaces, images also play an important part in the process. Generally, aaa produces images for their projects in retrospect, mapping the processes and networks engaged, such as in Figure 6.27. This process of mapping relationships becomes for aaa an exercise in participation:

to help us make visible to and discuss with others the facts and things that would have otherwise remained invisible and non-articulated (for example, the evolutive roles of a person or a device, the changes in the motivations of certain users, transformation in use, and so on).¹⁰⁸

Yet this is not a kind of distant and ‘objective’ examination. aaa is working in this context as the designers making the objects, they are actors making actors within this network. As such, they walk a fine line between being ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’.

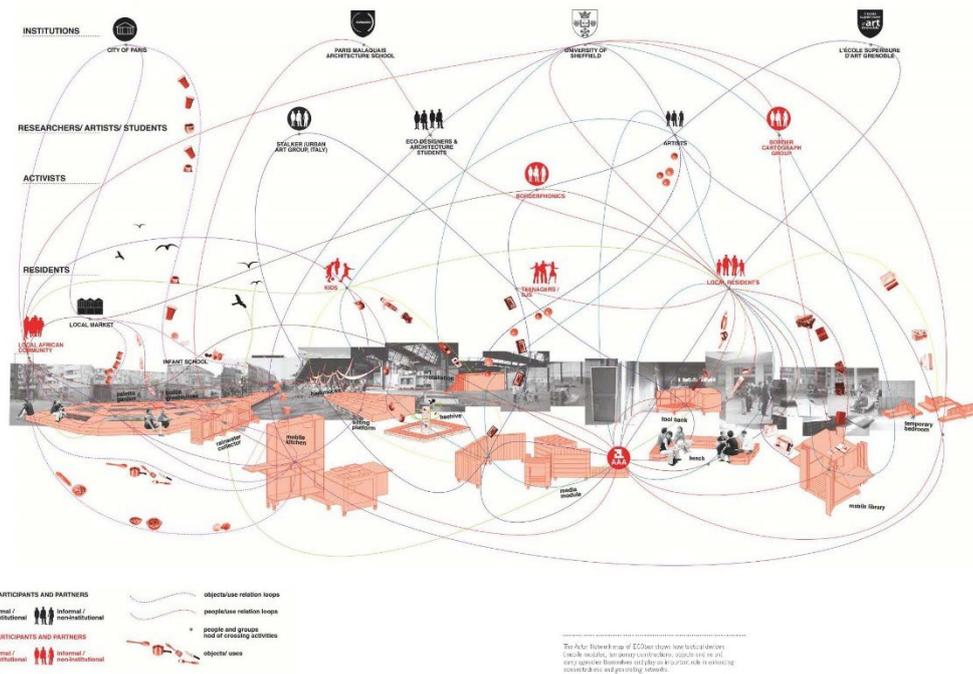


Figure 6.27. Relational mapping of the actors and objects from the project ECObox by *atelier d'architecture autogérée* (aaa - studio for self-managed architecture) Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu. From Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou, "Tactics for a Transgressive Practice," *Architectural Design* 83, no. 6 (2013): 62-63

¹⁰⁸ Petrescu, "Relationscapes: Mapping Agencies of Relational Practice in Architecture," 140.

A third project, *R-Urban*, differs somewhat in its use of speculative tactics due to the role played by a ‘vision’ produced for the project preceding its use or even a physical location (see Figure 6.28). The proposal had three interconnected parts: *AgroCité*, *Recyclab* and *EcoHab*. *AgroCité* is a centre for ‘agro-culture’, consisting of both farming and educational facilities (Figure 6.29). *Recyclab* is a factory and residency space for storing, sorting and designing with reclaimed material. *EcoHab* is a planned ecological housing development.¹⁰⁹ The three projects, envisioned as a network, were a specific attempt by the group to draw lessons from *ECObox* and *Passage 56* and apply them at a larger scale. *R-Urban* differs from the previous two projects in that it began as a set of images. The key ideas of the three hubs were developed through a period of research, and the package of ideas was then presented to different municipalities in a search for a partner, which the group eventually found in the Municipality of Colombes. Here, the production of images again plays a role in seeking to stimulate desire, this time at the larger scale of local government bureaucracy.



Figure 6.28. A speculative photo-montage of the proposed *AgroCité* project. From Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou, “R-Urban: Strategies and Tactics for Participative Utopias and Resilient Practices” in *Green Utopianism* eds. Karin Bradley, Johan Hedrén (New York: Routledge, 2014) 262.

¹⁰⁹ Francesca Ferguson, *Make_Shift City: Renegotiating the Urban Commons*, (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 102-109. A change of administration resulted in only *AgroCité* and *Recyclab* being built, with the housing component abandoned. Stefan Gruber, “R-Urban: Building Neighbourhood Resilience by Promoting Local Production and Consumption Cycles,” in *ARCH+ An Atlas of Commoning: Places of Collective Production* (Stuttgart: ifa, 2018), 168-9.

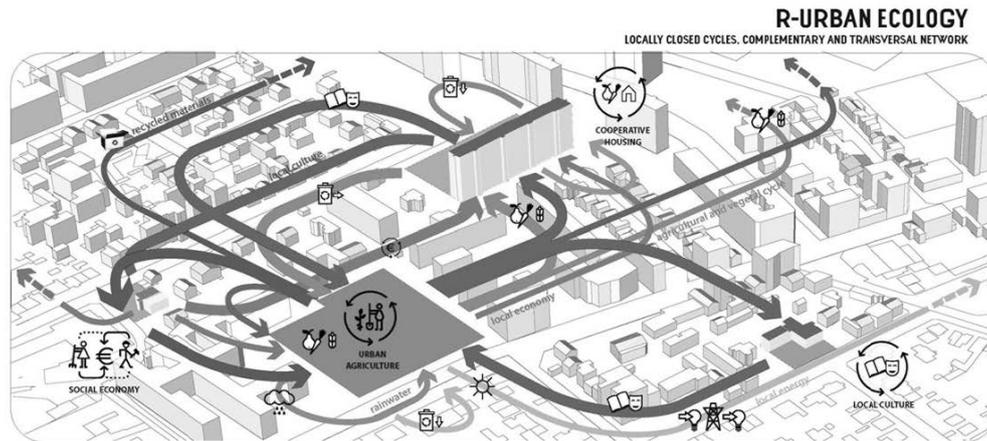


Figure 6.29. A proposed relational mapping of the R-Urban project. From Petrescu and Petcou, “R-Urban: Strategies and Tactics for Participative Utopias and Resilient Practices” 261.

Reality and utopia are in constant interaction in the work of aaa. This interaction operates at the immediate scale, moving between emerging desires and physical design infrastructures. As in the case of R-Urban, this can also operate at larger scales, where images of projective projects, drawn as extensions of the real projects, go on to initiate new real projects by assembling new client groups. As with the ‘utopias of participation’ described earlier in the chapter, this involves close readings of the existing context from which the speculative vision can be drawn out. Yet atelier d’architecture autogeree’s utopias go further: they are real in a fundamental sense—real material interventions in the space of the city. Because they are constructed, they must be in constant negotiation with the complexities and precarities of land ownership, regulatory restrictions and shifting sources of governmental support. What is most significant is the interaction of objects and relationships consciously developed through an iterative process. While *ECObox*, *Passage 56* and *R-Urban* are framed as three distinct projects, each contains a multitude of smaller projects, developed in an iterative chain. Taken together, the three projects could also be considered as a single project, gradually increasing in scale, complexity, sophistication and resourcing. While each project continues (now self-managed), the ideas generated through the project carry on to the next.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu, "R-Urban. Strategies and Tactics for Participative Utopias and Resilient Practices, in *Green Utopianism: Perspectives, Politics and Micro-Practices* eds. Karin Bradley, Johan Hedrén (Routledge, 2014), 266.

Utopian Props for Participation

It's like a finger pointing away to the moon. Don't concentrate on the finger, or you will miss all that heavenly glory.

Bruce Lee, *Enter the Dragon*, 1973

Tahl Kaminer has identified two principal motivations for practices of participation in architecture.¹¹¹ The first can be described as form-oriented, where participation is engaged in order to make the resulting architectural object better fitted to its users' needs. The second can be described as process-oriented, where the social and emotional benefits of participation itself, such as empowerment or ownership, are the primary goal and the objects being designed are of less importance. In the practices described above, it is possible to observe an approach which treats the dichotomy of form vs process in a different way. For example, *Manufactured sites* is primarily a project which is concerned with the reformulation of political and economic relationships, yet the central focus is a particular material object. This suggests a very different way of understanding architectural objects and their relationship to the social—one in which the object is the point of immediate focus, and yet not the real 'objective' of the project.

I would describe this kind of object as a prop. The prop is a different kind of object for participatory practice. It is a trojan horse, smuggling participation into projects, and a chimera, a cobbling together of aspects of reality to make an entirely new beast.¹¹² Critical designers Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby discuss props in their own speculative work. For them, the prop is an object which in various ways adds a potential reality to a fiction scenario. In this way, props are objects which prioritise their meaning over their function. As 'props for non-existent films', viewers of the object construct their own version of filmic reality around them.¹¹³ Dunne and Raby make a distinction between film props, with their need to reference 'the already known', and their own form of speculative objects which are intended to suggest that 'things can be very different indeed'. The props of film are meant to add a sense of reality to an otherwise fictional scenario. In the case of speculative objects, they become the fictional centre of an otherwise unimagined reality.

¹¹¹ Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture*, 79-80.

¹¹² Frederic Jameson uses the image of the chimera to describe the nature of utopia as drawn from elements of an existing situation. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, xiii.

¹¹³ Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (Cambridge: MIT press, 2013), 89-90.

The English word prop has two other aspects which are important to understanding how this conception of the speculative object operates in participatory practice. The first is the prop as the abbreviation of proposal or proposition (or even the propaganda of agit-prop). Here the object functions as a kind of propositional critique. Like Bruce Lee's finger, the prop here is used to point to something beyond itself. This could be a particular instance of injustice or inequality. It could also be a possible alternative. It could, as with Cruz's *Manufactured Sites* or Dogma's *Live Forever* projects, do both, sitting as they do between questioning existing relationships and proposing the formation of new ones around a new kind of object.

The first is the prop understood as the kind of temporary support employed in construction; it takes the load until the final building is capable of doing so itself, at which point it is removed and deployed elsewhere. It may be modular and reusable like the planning containers developed through *Park Fiction*. It is behind the scenes and seeks to be unnoticed. The initial intervention only prepares the ground for what is to come. The aim of the object is to dissolve completely. This resonates with what many practitioners also seek— playing a key role at first in instigating new collectively managed structures and then exiting once they have been established. These practitioners seek to act as catalysts and to avoid building dependence upon themselves.

There are commonalities across these different aspects. The prop stands in the place of something other than itself. In all cases, the object is crucial, central to the action or task, yet not the main game. The prop is an actor, but it plays only a supporting role. There are also many contradictions. The prop is something we depend on, but also something that can be used to trick us. It is behind the scenes and yet catches the attention. It is passively supportive but also outspoken and accusatory. It is within the paradoxes of the prop that we can locate tools to circumvent some of the inherent tensions of participatory practice. The notion of the prop provides a way to move beyond the dichotomy of form vs process. Here the form-oriented position is reversed; the object is the means to arrive at better participation. But the participation is not only participation in the use or design of the object itself but, rather, participation *beyond* the object.

Critical, Relational, Utopian Practice.

This chapter has explored the question of what it means for architecture to be critical of the situations in which it is set, with particular focus on the issues it raises for participatory practices. Various perspectives on this question have been examined to suggest what it means for architecture to be critical and what issues are at stake. By assembling these divergent voices I have outlined a composite model of criticality which acknowledges architecture's fundamental complicity, while locating possibilities for architecture to use its circumscribed moments of autonomy to propose, build, test and re-propose concrete alternatives.

By considering the specific operations of criticality within a diverse range of contemporary practices, I have identified two interdependent strategies for nurturing and enabling these moments of criticality. The first is the return to utopia as critical practice, both as visionary design work and as speculative spatial interventions, to imagine, inhabit and build the city otherwise. The second strategy attends closely to the relational aspects of the conditions in which they are working and of the objects they are designing. All of the practices discussed here propose alternate forms of architecture, housing or public space. Some, such as Cruz and Dogma, produce only paper visions of these alternatives. Others, such as Rakowitz and aaa, produce real interventions in the city. Whether paper or concrete, all these projects produce critical images, creating dissonance with existing models.

These projects do not create alternatives in terms of innovative form-making; rather, the alternatives being described relate to different social and political formulations which can be gathered around and through reorganisations of standardised architectural objects. Cruz's *Manufactured Sites* sketches a new relationship between already connected parties, making tangible the effects of exploitation. Dogma's *Live Forever* gathers together a ubiquitous but largely unseen collective by envisioning their ideal architecture. Both these projects tread a line between critiquing a situation (the exploitation of landless migrants by multinational capital, and the precarious living situation of creative workers, respectively) and designing a form which might make things better. The reconfigured architectural objects proposed make visible the problem, by seeking to address it.

When operationalised in the real spaces of the city, such real-yet-utopian approaches use objects of design to provide critique and gather collectivities in different ways. *ParaSITE* operates much as paper architecture speculations do, highlighting the problem of homelessness through a device

intended to ameliorate its worst effects and which in its very materiality (plastic bags and building exhaust) literally ties the homeless to the architecture which excludes them. For Bergendal, aaa and *Park Fiction*, vacant sites and development proposals become objects around which to gather communities of concern. In each project a utopian space is opened up through which the site or project can be reimaged. The communities gathered by these projects, being real, are necessarily more vague and heterogeneous compared to those imagined by Cruz and Dogma. This results in a less sharply defined critical image, but one which is able to approach reality more closely. Propositional images of conflicting utopian desires are archived (*Park Fiction*), prototyped (aaa) and 'knitted-together' (Bergendal). Critique and proposition here operate at the micro scale, and are necessarily pluralistic, yet bundled together in their resulting forms. Each of the three projects provides a utopian image of urban development, an image that highlights and implicitly critiques the 'anti-social' urbanism which surrounds it on all sides.

Walking the line between being critical and effecting actual change is not easy. It requires practitioners to be aware of their own complicity in the systems which they are simultaneously seeking to counter. Bergendal recognises that she is an instrument for developers but nevertheless accepts the need to get her 'hands dirty' in order to enable the project's tangible benefits to roll on. The eventual placement of *Park Fiction* on the City of Hamburg's website arguably demonstrates how an alternative to developer-led gentrification will only be re-routed for value production by the same actors the project originally aimed to critique. Yet it is also crucial to see each project as part of a process, whereby the utopian process model of *Park Fiction* is now being transferred to the production of alternative proposals for housing development in the St Pauli district. This model of utopian *process* can be observed in the iterative development of furniture and buildings within and across the projects of aaa. To date, these projects have continued to grow in scale and, at times, become permanent urban conditions. In all of them, the speculative freedom of the utopian form provides a lightness and possibility for dealing with the complex and conflicted realities of architectural production, while close attention to these same realities grounds these fictions and makes them possible. It is by maintaining both aspects that these practices manage to be both critical and effective in limited but genuine ways.

7. Conclusion: Practising the Realistic Utopia Today

This research began with my own discomfort, as a practitioner, with the limited ability of participatory architecture to critically engage with the political, social and economic systems which frame and enable its interventions. I was troubled by the disjunction between the emancipatory premises of participation and the relatively narrow scope of the questions I was discussing with the participants. What did one collaborative design on one site matter when the broader structural issues of housing unaffordability and urban gentrification remained untouched? Although my concurrent gallery-based works, which considered these broader structural issues through designs for fictional client groups and speculative scenarios, allowed unlimited scope for critical questioning, they failed to achieve anything in the real world. Consequently, I was seeking a model of practice which was able to bring together a criticality in participatory practice and an efficacy in speculative practice.

This search led me to a concept drawn from Giancarlo De Carlo's early theorisation of participation in architecture, the 'realistic Utopia.' De Carlo only used this term in one text, *An Architecture of Participation*. There he introduced it to counter the rhetorical argument that participation, defined as a complete dissolution of power structures via total equality of decision making, was an unachievable fantasy. He described his notion of participation as a *realistic* utopia because it proposed not a replacement of context but, rather, a reformulation of context based on a close reading of all the variables and forces at play within it. He then articulated a more general form of making architectural 'counter-images', ranging from political writings to speculative designs and built work, of which his own proposal for participation was one. While De Carlo acknowledged that these images only rarely instigate change, he saw them playing a key role in highlighting the artificially constructed situations existing in reality by proposing a reorganisation of their constituent elements.

When De Carlo scholars have engaged with the realistic utopia, they have predominantly discussed the term in framing participation *as* a realistic utopia. My interest here is to understand how the concept may operate *within* an architecture of participation, using speculative image making to

critically engage with the broader social, political and financial contexts which frame its projects.¹ In order to understand how the realistic utopia can operate in this way, I have argued that it needs to be connected to De Carlo's reframing of design within the process of participation as 'hypotheses', images of possible architectures intended to critically confront future users and to be critically reworked in response to the new demands they elicit. De Carlo intended these hypotheses to call into question the basic assumptions of the project, be critiqued by the potential user and reworked by the architect in response. This sets up an iterative process whereby the images act to make visible the inherent conflicts of a project at the same time as a provisional resolution of them is sought and subsequently replaced by a more appropriate one. I have argued that it is this sense of the critical, speculative image being in constant, iterative circulation between architect and user which makes possible the close attention to the vast set of relationships, forces and variables that is called for by his description of the realistic utopia. It is this broader conception of the realistic utopia which I see as providing a conceptual tool for architects practising today.

Chapter 1 defined the central concepts of the thesis by connecting De Carlo's description of the realistic utopia to his other notions of speculative image making developed across his two key early texts on participation: the 1970 article "Il pubblico dell'architettura" and the 1972 published lecture *An Architecture of Participation*. I argued that the realistic utopia can be understood not only as a descriptor for the 'architecture of participation' but as a crucial component of a participatory process whereby counter-images are iteratively refined in critical dialogue with future users. De Carlo understood reality as a complex relational system from which these counter-images drew their constituent elements, reorganised as a proposed alternative form. He framed the role of the architect as a producer of critical-propositional images which simultaneously called into question the basic elements of budget, program and location and proposed alternate physical, environmental manifestations of these factors. Crucially, these images were provisional, open to criticism by the participants, thereby raising further questions and generating further images in response. Through this iterative, cyclical process, I argued, the complexity of reality could be incrementally revealed, making the realistic utopia a means by which reality could be critically understood and potentially transformed.

¹ Two authors in particular have moved towards this understanding. Sara Marini has pointed out the connection of the term to De Carlo's own use of images within his projects. Camillo Boano has proposed the term as a means to hold together the seemingly contradictory notions of autonomy and participation. See Chapter 1 for discussion.

Chapter 2 began to contextualise the realistic utopia through an account of De Carlo's earlier work in which he developed his notions of the relational aspects of architectural form and its potential social efficacy. These ideas were examined in relation to a set of contemporaneous and proximate positions on utopia and reality in architecture to highlight their differences and similarities and to draw out threads of possible influence. Connections were drawn, from De Carlo's own work and those of his contemporaries, to articulate key aspects of the realistic utopia as a propositional-critique, a relational-artefact, and a process-form. This chapter provided the crucial background to understanding the contexts from which the idea emerged and against which it was directed. Here, the realistic utopia, as an integral component of participation, was itself a critical image for reformulating the practice of architecture in the shadow of the perceived failures of the modern movement.

Chapter 3 followed the processes of De Carlo's participatory housing and urban projects in Terni and Rimini in the early 1970s. These episodes highlight the large-scale, government-led production of the built environment against which De Carlo had formulated his idea of the realistic utopia. I have argued that the realistic utopia, as critical architectural image-making, played a part in both projects, as did the projection and contestation of the image of participation itself. The projects reveal problems for the previously described process of participation both in its limited application by the architect, and via confrontations with the commissioning authorities as well as other stakeholders, including the intended participants, which led to the premature termination of both projects. While commonly cast as failures of the participatory process, I have argued that, by viewing these projects through the lens of the realistic utopia, they can be reframed as only initial images of participation, intended to operate within an iterative process of critical influence and open to continued revision. This discussion revealed that maintaining the relationships necessary to continue the critical dialogue is a key and complex challenge for the enactment of any version of the realistic utopia.

Chapter 4 sought to understand why De Carlo did not develop the concept of the realistic utopia through later iterations. I argued that, while the experiences in Terni and Rimini played a part, his 1976 article, "Altri appunti sulla partecipazione", which can be read as a reflection on these projects, does not substantially challenge his earlier positions. Of greater significance were the ongoing shifts in political, social and disciplinary contexts, evidenced through De Carlo's ambivalent role at of the *America/Europa* exhibition and the debate that accompanied the 1976 Venice Biennale. At this time, critical, speculative image making in architecture came to be associated with agendas of disciplinary autonomy and formal experimentation, against which De

Carlo positioned his notion of participation. The context in which the realistic utopia was formulated had significantly changed, and the notion was no longer suited to its time. While De Carlo appears to have discarded his notion of the realistic utopia, I argued rather that he folded it into a broader conception of architecture through his 1978 lecture “Reflections on the Present State of Architecture”. Here, images of architecture were framed as mobile, detached from particular times, places or architects.

Chapter 5 explored the extent to which the conditions framing participation have changed since the time of De Carlo’s early formulations. The key issues facing practices of participation were unpacked in relation to distinct iterations of participatory practice, from Advocacy Planning in the USA in the 1960s to Community Architecture in the UK in the 1980s and the diverse set of practices that emerged at the beginning of the 21st century. Over this period, participation moved from a strategy aimed at reforming the institutional provision of housing and urban planning, to one that sought alternatives within more nebulous, market-driven systems of housing and urbanisation. I assembled diverse critical perspectives on participatory architectural practices which ran alongside these developments. I argued that a common concern in these diverse contributions was the inability of participatory practices to critically understand and act in relation to the broader social, political and financial contexts in which they operate. This has been understood variously as a lack of criticality towards expressed desires (populism), a lack of criticality towards actual effects (tokenism), a suppression of genuine conflicts, a means to inoculate itself from judgement, and a complete assimilation into forms of self-exploitation. Examples of recent practices were introduced to highlight how these issues have persisted and intensified for participatory practices operating within contemporary neoliberal frameworks of spatial production. These practices have been labelled as simultaneously complicit and ineffective in regard to processes such as gentrification and real estate speculation. I argued that this context emphasises the need for tools that enable critical reflection and engagement beyond the limits of the project.

In Chapter 6 I outlined a set of distinct theoretical positions on the possibility of criticality in architectural practice in order to re-examine the projects which have, in different ways, returned to the concerns of participation over the last two decades. An analysis of these projects and their attempts at criticality-in-practice identified two key features. The first was a return to the critical function of utopian practice. The second was a focus on the relational networks surrounding the objects of architecture. I argued that distinctly utopian forms of practice, variously enacted as visionary design work or speculative actions in space, are combined in these projects with a close

attendance to the realities in which these utopias may be set. This combined approach acknowledges architecture's embedded and dependent position within broader networks of power and influence while articulating some means to propose, establish and maintain critical alternatives to those relational systems.

This concluding chapter draws together material from the two preceding parts to reiterate the core contribution of the thesis and outline how the specific reading of De Carlo's realistic utopia can open up new prospects for participatory and critical practice. To do this it looks to what we can gain by returning to De Carlo's conception of the realistic utopia, and in what ways it needs to be adapted to operate in the present moment. To this end, I discuss how the complex notion of the realistic utopia, as developed through Chapters 1-4, can navigate the issues and dilemmas faced by the practices of participation outlined in Chapter 5, by modifying them according to some of the modes of criticality articulated in Chapter 6. I argue that the concept of the realistic utopia, while formulated more than 50 years ago in very different conditions, nevertheless provides lessons for how to nurture criticality within practices of participation operating through the more amorphous structures of power and influence today. The realistic utopia articulates a number of key elements which contribute to this: the positive role of conflict within participation, a radically expanded design process, the production of simultaneously critical and propositional images, an explicit focus on the relational contexts from which these images can be drawn, and the idea of these images being in iterative circulation within these contexts and beyond.

While recent discourses on participation have sought to highlight participation's lack of criticality, I argue that De Carlo always advocated an explicitly conflictual mode of participation through the critical-propositional counter-images of the realistic utopia. They were proposed to act as 'disruptive triggers', calling into question the underlying assumptions of all parties involved in the process.² Markus Miessen has recently questioned the role of participation in stifling critique through its implicit drive to establish stable forms of consensus. While the valorisation of consensus can be read in the later formulations of participation by Henry Sanoff or Wates and Knevitt, for De Carlo consensus was only ever to be momentarily achieved, as a means to enact some version of the image, instigating a new round of critical questioning. In this process the realistic utopia, as visual or verbal image, was proposed as the medium through which the assumptions of both the users and the architect can continue to challenge one another. In De Carlo's own projects, such critical images were used to explicitly question the expressed desires of

² Giancarlo De Carlo, "Alla ricerca di un diverso modo di progettare," *Casabella* 421 (January 1977): 18.

participants, providing a mechanism to avoid the issues of uncritical populism identified by Tzonis and Lefaivre. According to his writings, this was not intended as a one way ‘educational’ intervention but, instead, aimed to provoke a critical ‘rebound’ capable of challenging the assumptions and ‘cultural structures’ of those who set off the process—the architects themselves. As discussed in Chapter 3, this ‘rebound’ was less evident, given the tight control he maintained of the formal and procedural aspects of the project. Jeremy Till has noted the limited focus on architect-user relations and questioned how practices of participation could critically consider the forces beyond. I argue that the realistic utopia offers a particularly valuable way of considering these wider forces, their unseen influence, and their complex effects and relationships.

De Carlo recognised the fundamental complicity of architecture with the commissioning structures of power. Yet, through the notion of the realistic utopia, he maintained that architectural practice could stimulate change, albeit indirectly, via the production of critical counter-images. For him, architecture could play a role in prefiguring change by proposing ‘concrete images of what the physical environment would be like if the structure of society were different’, images capable of revealing both ‘a condition of abuse and a prospect of progress’.³ At the 1976 Venice debate, he reiterated the conditional yet critical position of the architectural image to ‘prefigure new situations that can be taken as a goal for a change in the current situation’.⁴ De Carlo saw existing systems of power, even when apparently smooth and seamless, as nevertheless riddled with moments of internal contradictions. Rather than providing an exit from the dilemma of architecture’s dependencies on power, the realistic utopia provided a way to operate critically inside them, working within ‘cracks’ in the present system, simultaneously drawing attention to the contradiction at the same time as using it as the site for establishing an alternative.

³ Giancarlo De Carlo, “Il Pubblico Dell’Architettura,” *Parametro* 5, (1970) 10, 12.

⁴ ‘L’architettura è ovvio non può fare rivoluzioni ma l’architettura può prefigurare nuove situazioni che possono esser prese come traguardo per una modificazione della situazione attuale’, Giancarlo De Carlo, Transcript of a conference at Venice Biennale, IAUS fonds, CCA, 24.

The possibility for such images to play a role in supporting social change can only be understood as a component of the expanded process which lay at the heart of De Carlo's notion of participation. I argue that this crucial understanding has been lost in subsequent interpretations of participation, which have prioritised participation within a traditional notion of a design process that is limited in scope and duration. For De Carlo, every moment in the conception, production and use of a building, from the setting of the brief to later inhabitation and alteration, is reframed as a continuous process of design. This reformulation was aimed at expanding the influence of users (and, by association, architects) to critically engage with initial decisions of budget, program and location for any project as well as disrupting the linearity of 'authoritarian' design to instigate a process of constant critical revision. I argue that this process of feedback, which De Carlo had been developing since the mid-1960s, is fundamental to the critical operation of the realistic utopia.⁵ De Carlo's notion was that, while counter-images of social and architectural alternatives cannot hope to make societal changes on their own, they can play a role by stimulating a kind of feedback mechanism in which transformations within society and projections within architecture can be mutually supportive in driving for change. In order for any critical intervention to have any possibility of effecting change, this iterative process of making critical propositions must continue in a dialectical process with the social realities in which it is enmeshed. This is only possible when engaging with 'the world in its whole complexity'.⁶ While De Carlo's descriptions of monolithic power structures universally opposed to the desires of the people can appear reductive, I argue that his notion of iterative and reticulating process of proposition and critique contains possibilities to engage with a more complex reality (Figure 7.1).

⁵ See for example "Our work is in the field of forms. But forms have actions of feedback on structures and functions," Giancarlo De Carlo, "Appunti preparati per una presentazione di due progetti, Berlino, 12-17 ottobre 1964" in *Giancarlo De Carlo: Pervorsi*, ed. Francesco Samassa (Milan: Il Poligrafo, Venice: IUAV Archivio Progetto, 2004), 377. This and other examples are discussed in Chapter 2.

⁶ Giancarlo De Carlo, "Testo delle conclusioni ad un intervento ad Harvard, dicembre 1967" in *Giancarlo De Carlo: Pervorsi*, 445.

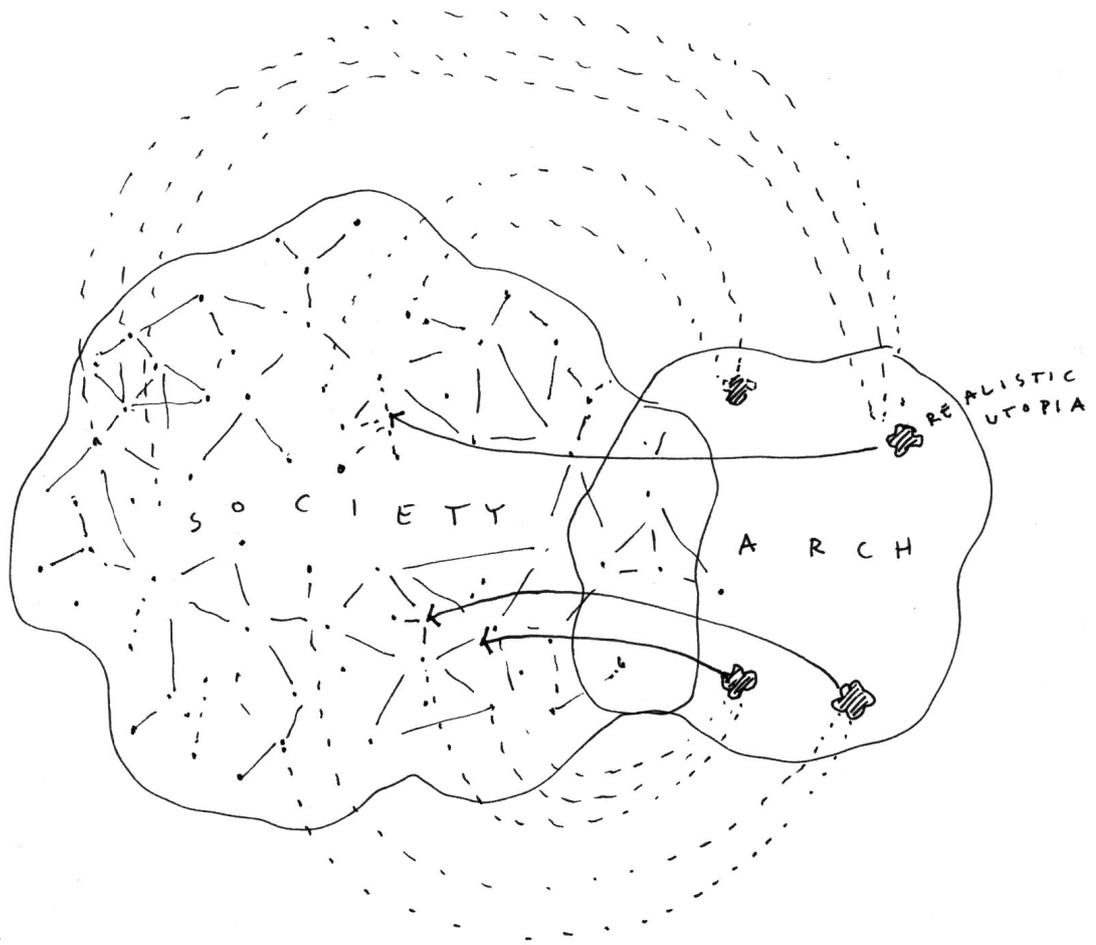


Figure 7.1. The model for criticality proposed by De Carlo via the realistic utopia. Contradictions and conflicts within the complex set of relationships and dependencies of society provide sites for critical alternatives to be developed in the semi-autonomous space of architecture and reinserted as counter-images, which continue to be critically confronted by society, resulting in further iteratively refined images.

For De Carlo, the qualification of being ‘realistic’ was crucial to the efficacy of utopian, image-making practice. The conjugation of reality and utopia within architecture is not unique, being articulated many times, from Ernesto Rogers’ ‘Utopia of reality’ in 1962 to Reinhold Martin’s ‘Utopian realism’ in 2005.⁷ All these formulations seek a productive tension by combining the seemingly opposed terms. I have linked this attribute to Aldo van Eyck’s notion of ‘twin-phenomena’ and observed that it runs through the realistic utopia’s linking of other seemingly opposite tendencies: between proposition and critique, question and solution, autonomy and engagement and, ultimately, criticality and participation.⁸ What is most distinct and valuable about De Carlo’s formulation is his claim that the key to making a utopia realistic was to construct each counter image through careful attention to the existing relational context ‘without omitting the forces which act in the context and taking into account both their present and potential energies’.⁹ The question of *how* utopia could engage with reality is, however, left ambiguous.

I argue that the mechanism for this attendance to reality is tied to De Carlo’s attempts to understand architecture primarily through its processes and relationships, rather than its objects, while at the same time maintaining a focus on the architectural object under consideration. This is an aspect which, while seemingly fundamental for De Carlo in his writings, remained abstract and is difficult to observe in his own projects. I argue that the realistic utopia can be usefully augmented by drawing on Bruno Latour’s concept of *Dingpolitik*.¹⁰ By understanding the products of architecture (from project briefs, to drawings and buildings) as densely connected, socio-material ‘things’ which sit at the centre of a network of concerned actors, they can be used to draw us out of an internalised discussion of user-architect dynamics into a discussion of the rich and complex network of external relationships which form around them. In terms of the realistic utopia, this likewise enables the proposition of alternative objects involving differently organised relationships, such as housing types for models of collective tenure.

The realistic utopia pre-empts recent calls to reintroduce practices of utopian speculation as a means for architecture to critically confront existing political realities, by providing images of their alternatives. The political, social and economic conditions of neoliberalism have been identified as particularly problematic for the practice of participation’s ability to operate without being subsumed and appropriated, as made clear through the work of Tahl Kaminer, Fran Tonkiss and

⁷ Roger’s text is discussed in Chapter 2 while Martin’s is introduced in Chapter 6.

⁸ This argument is developed in Chapter 2.

⁹ Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1972). 25-26.

¹⁰ This connection was developed through Chapter 6.

others discussed in Chapter 5. As discussed in Chapter 6, Ana Jeinic and Britt Eversole have advocated a return to utopian practice in architecture in response to the anti-utopianism of neoliberalism and the regressive utopianism of populist politics, respectively. The idea of the realistic utopia, while drawn up against a very different set of systems to those encountered today, nevertheless provides a very particular model of how critical utopian images can be useful to a practice concerned with participation. In Chapter 6, I discussed a range of projects which, while never intentionally undertaken as such, can be analysed as experimental applications of the realistic utopia under today's conditions. I argue that, while this analysis highlights the limitations to such a practice today, it also enables aspects of the realistic utopia which remained abstract in De Carlo's formulation to be drawn out more concretely.

Many of these projects demonstrate the use of an architectural image to critique an existing relational setup by proposing its reformulation around a proposed object. For example, Teddy Cruz's project *Manufactured Sites* is a speculative counter-image to a current situation, highlighting a 'condition of abuse' in the existing relational setup of the *maquiladoras* and their landless workers by proposing a housing solution which implicates them both. While apparently focussing on an architectural object, the Manufactured Site, the project is really about engaging with the complex realities of the border region of San Diego/Tijuana, with all its flows and stoppages of people, materials and capital and the relations of exploitation, dependency and desire at work. It is a powerful image, one that questions the social, political and economic frameworks in which it is situated. While it speculates about the possibilities for participation, the project itself has no participants beyond theoretical ones. In terms of the realistic utopia's proposed process of recirculation, the project is inert. It is a single image, never to be enacted.

In this regard, the interlinked projects of *atelier d'architecture autogérée* (aaa) can be read as more closely approximating the realistic utopia's iterative process. In his original formulation, De Carlo had proposed that the three stages of participation—identification of needs, formulation of hypotheses and modification through use—should happen in a cyclical fashion, each one informing the next. In the project of aaa, the three stages happen almost concurrently through the incremental development of speculative objects. Each object—palette garden, mobile kitchen, reading room or recycling plant—acts as a tentative hypothesis, being tested through use while simultaneously serving as a means to generate new desires and discover additional needs. As discussed in Chapter 3, De Carlo's own projects of participation were limited to a few experiments only, and never achieved the iterative, reticulating circulation imagined in theory. In this regard, aaa's process could be seen as closer to the proposed cyclical nature of the realistic utopia than De Carlo's own practice. Yet their projects, however finely tailored, remain small-scale compared to the large-scale housing and urban planning schemes possible in De Carlo's own time.

Addressing the perception in his own time that participation could not be implemented in the face of large-scale problems and over long timespans, De Carlo argued that large-scale participation could only be achieved through a multitude of small-scale actions.¹¹ This appears to be the strategy across the many diverse forms being practised today. The projects of aaa do show some progress in this regard, moving from temporary pallet gardens to projects involving multiple interrelated buildings constructed throughout an urban centre. The *Mietshäuser Syndikat* (MS) provides another model for scaling up through accretion, one which can be described as a realistic utopia in that it reconstructs a viable alternative from the components of the system to which it is opposed. Here, the existing relational elements are reassembled to create a legal and financial model able to circumvent extractive real estate land speculation. This is perhaps the clearest example of operating 'against-from-with' and, at its most ambitious, could be seen as a way to rebuild a kind of mass housing constructed along entirely participatory lines.

De Carlo spoke of the need to find or even invent new clients as the key way to disentangle architecture from the requirements of power. The search for new clients has become a central feature of projects like aaa, Kerstin Bergendal or *Park Fiction*, each gathering new collectives around controversial projects, vacant sites, and possible new uses. Much of the work of the more resolutely speculative practices, such as Dogma and Cruz, is directed at articulating collectives which may not yet see themselves as such. The projects aligned to the MS demonstrate the advantage of

¹¹ De Carlo, "Altri appunti." Refer to Chapter 4 for a discussion of this.

architects aligning themselves to existing social initiatives. While neither the speculative work of Dogma/Realism Working Group nor the actual buildings designed for the MS, such as *WiLMa19* by Clemens Kug/Bernard Hummel, have in themselves created the innovative ownership model, they are assisting in important ways. Whereas the real project negotiates the complexities of spatialising the competing demands of such a collective, the speculative project explores how the model could be expanded. I have argued that De Carlo eventually folded his notion of the realistic utopia into a broader notion of critical architecture detached from place, project or architect, available to be picked up and continued by others. In this way, projects can join together into a kind of ecosystem, where critical explorations and grounded production become mutually supportive. The paper and concrete schemes both have roles to play here, whether within a single practice, as in *aaa* or *Park Fiction*, or across different practices working to the same model.

Participation was, for De Carlo, a utopia, an ideal condition towards which one must strive in full knowledge that its perfect state will never be achieved. His notion of the realistic utopia, as I have defined and augmented it, can be understood in the same terms. It is an ideal format for a critical practice of participation that will never be perfected. De Carlo once said that participation, after it has been initiated, lasts forever. The realistic utopia is an explicit articulation of how that infinite process of participation can be sought; its unreachable goal is to be found in the process it doggedly continues to propose, critique and maintain. This, ultimately, is a collective effort and one which goes on in many forms, across manifold sites, projects and practices, each with their own complex stories of success and failure. The crucial thing is to continue the effort, across the many iterations of a project and between different projects, across the many images projected, processes initiated, and objects formed.

As discussed in Chapter 5, small-scale, participatory projects intervening in the complexities of urban space can readily be cast as misplaced, co-opted, tokenistic and manipulative. None of these problems disappears with the realistic utopia. Instead, it offers a way of finding a productive balance, a mode of navigating between the poles of uncritically selling out or inertly refusing to participate. As with De Carlo's own projects, the realistic utopia provides a frame within which to view the success and failure of projects in a different way, one that considers their relational effects beyond a particular site or project. It becomes a way to understand these projects critically without reducing their complex relations and effects. In this thesis, these analyses of recent projects of participation using the realistic utopia have been sketched in an indicative way. Further research is needed to unpack more fully their 'motivations and consequences'.¹²

The original intention of this research was to seek a possibility for participatory practices of architecture to maintain criticality in practice. While the realistic utopia can be used to interpret such an approach in existing practices, I argue that it could equally be used consciously as a mode of practice. De Carlo's preoccupation with re-asserting the relevance of the architectural profession remains current in a discipline whose role has been steadily eroded by project managers and other 'specialists'.¹³ In this regard, a possible way for architects to return to relevance could be as realistic-utopians-in-residence, attending to the many and multiple desires gathered around a particular location, creating images of alternatives and refining them in critical dialogue with their relevant communities of concern.

In conclusion, let me return to one of the projects I introduced at the beginning of this thesis to frame my misgivings about participatory architecture's potential for criticality—the public consultation on public space in a contested and rapidly gentrifying area of Sydney.¹⁴ As this project has developed, slowly over four years, we have chosen to adopt the realistic-utopian-in-residence as our own model of practice. We have channeled our discussions with various publics into the production of images of possible public spaces for the site, ranging from a vast phytoremediation forest to rid the site of decades of dry-cleaning contaminants, to a proposal to raise the entire development on stilts, preserving the open field below as true uncommodified public space. To our surprise, the municipality has taken our speculative visions seriously, embedding elements into their regulatory framework. Through negotiation with the land-owners, each element has been

¹² De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 9.

¹³ De Carlo's attitude towards specialisation was discussed in Chapter 2.

¹⁴ The project has been developed in collaboration with D'harawal Knowledge Keeper Shannon Foster and Jo-Anne Kinniburgh of Bangawarra, particularly in regard to the notion of Dahl'wah and understanding the site as living Country.

reduced—from a forest to a set of ‘pods’, from a site-wide condition to modifications at the building edges. Utopia has been bargained down due to the realities of commercial tenancies and the potential liabilities of exposing the toxins in the ground. While it is hard to say yet if anything of these original visions will remain, I would appear we have secured one element. The public art funding from developer levies will, on this site, not be used to fund monumental sculptures and façade elements. Instead it will be used to pay for an ongoing set of residencies (Fig. 7.2), each tasked with continuing discussions with the diverse publics of this site, proposing new uses, forming new collectives and augmenting the public space over a period of 20 years. In this way, while our original ‘hypotheses’ may never bear fruit, the process of realistic-utopian-production will, we hope, roll on.

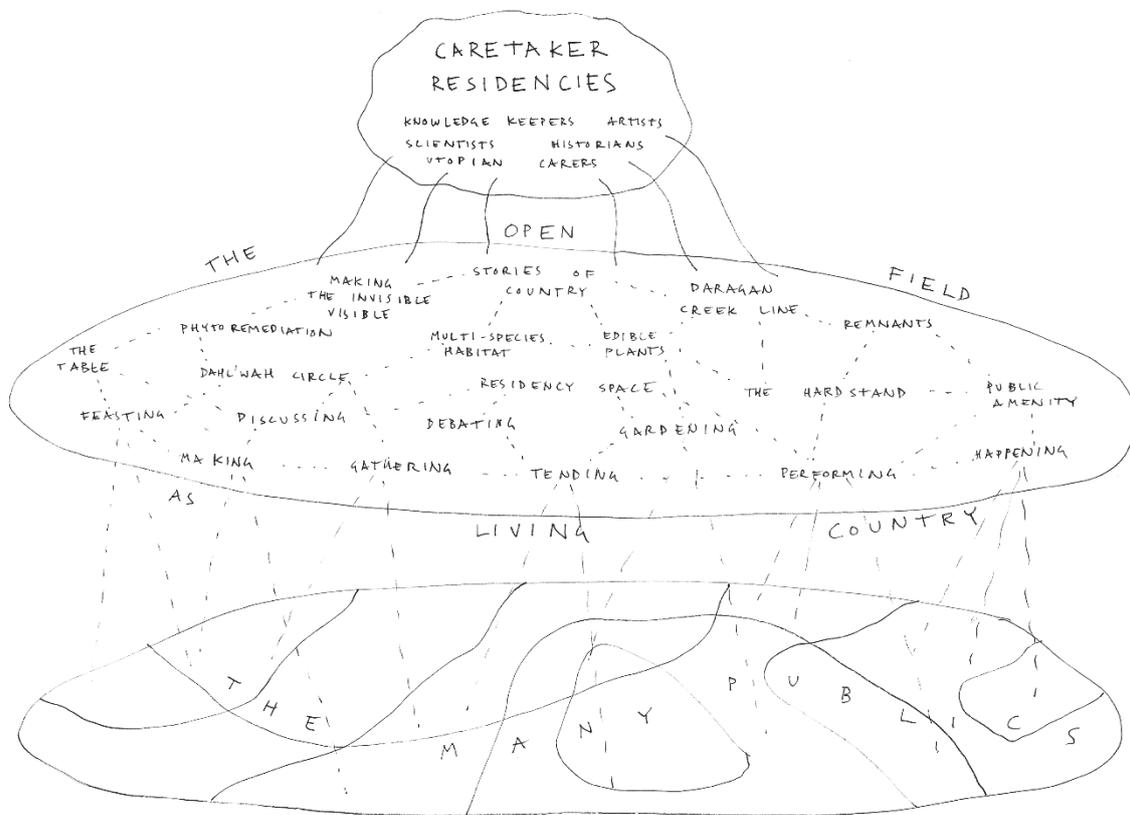


Figure 7.2. Diagram for the ‘Caretaker Residencies’ as proposed for the Open Field Agency project. MAPA Art & Architecture, 2021.

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