Márcio Moraes Valença
Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (PPGAU–UFRN), Natal, Brazil; Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra

Doors, Floors, Street

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*Searching for Meaning
in an Uneven Urban World*

This paper, divided in five sections, is supported by established theoretical background. The paper points to the idea of human emancipation and to the potential role of architecture in helping the development of a more just and egalitarian society. The terms and concepts that are used in this essay have something in common; although they refer to different intellectual and disciplinary contexts, they have overlapping features which are critical to the understanding of an active, participatory culture in everyday life as a necessary aspect of society. People must take charge of their own lives and of the immediate conditions of living of their surroundings. The idea of co-creation that is presented more fully in Section 5 benefits from the discussions in previous sections about the private and public space, the right to the city, Michel de Certeau's views on walking, and Reyner Banham's concept of the responsive environment. Co-creation is participation in its ultimate form. The fundamental idea is to plan and build a better world and better cities collectively. To make this easier, architects should also co-create more adaptable, controllable, and responsive buildings and urban spaces. Co-creation must be fostered, using intensive participatory processes, to define certain features of what is being done or built. However, this struggles against all odds to become a common practice in public policy. The search for social justice in the city still has a long way to go. Having said this, architecture and urban design are too important to be left out; they may not change the world but may help to make it better.

1 Roberto DaMatta, *A casa & a rua: espaço, cidadania, mulher e morte no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1997). Originally published 1987.

1

A door, a simple door! How many meanings can be attributed to it? Is it simply a physical entity, set in an opening in the wall of a building? If so, what strange things are hidden behind it? Many worlds, experiences, experiments, mundane stories, histories, secrets, love, and hate are kept "within walls" by a simple door. Ghosts! Past and present, much of which the future will never know about or reveal. A doormat indicates a way in or may function as a gatekeeper, a stopping point. A door selects and allows entrance/the right of way. A door is a passage to a new and different world. It acts as an invitation to strangers, arouses curiosity; there is some sort of life on the other side, perhaps unknown, perhaps imagined. The door is a passage that separates what is inside from what is outside; it is a possibility, a control that allows private and public life to be kept each on its place. One may be welcome to go in, but one must knock first, ask for permission, follow the rules inside; or not, the door may be your own door, your passage to kingdom. A door separates two opposing sides, or rather not. It separates two sides of the same, like a nose between the eyes. This threshold that separates also integrates; it also allows a passage of way to the unknown or to what is known but under the control of others. Outside lies new horizons to be explored, new encounters to be had; inside lies the comfort of intimacy and/or the security of a controlled environment, shared with blood/ peers. Outside is also a way to reach other intimate spaces. A door acts as a permeable membrane, selecting what should or should not go through. Knock, knock! Who is there? Come in! Make yourself at home! Welcome!

The public and the private (or intimate, or domestic) are, at a first look, binary concepts. When talking about questions on a city scale, intimacy also relates to reserved spaces, but reserved spaces—like workspaces—are not always (or almost never) intimate. Our bodies define the boundaries of relationships at certain levels or scales. Brazilian anthropologist, Roberto DaMatta, a Notre Dame emeritus, in his *A casa & a rua* (The house & the street), shows how intimate (in his case domestic) and public spaces (the street) had to be mediated by a passage/transition space in urban colonial and imperial houses in Brazil, or, as he calls, the Brazilian traditional house (even of today).[1] Most houses followed Portuguese-like layouts; they were set in line, side by side, often with a common dividing wall, and faced the street so that the first room along a lengthy corridor was a living room, called *sala de visitas* (the visitors' room). Individual houses could also have a porch and a small patio to make a transition to the street. Anyone who was not a family member, or a close friend, had to remain in these transition spaces whereas the more intimate rooms (bedrooms and other living rooms), including spaces under the care of women (kitchen and service areas), were placed towards the back of the house. Usually, in the corridor, separating the visitor's room and the rest of the house, there was a door that could be kept open when no strangers were present. Domestic employees' rooms (including also domestic slaves up until the end of the nineteenth century)

2   DaMatta, *A casa & a rua.*

3   Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (London: Penguin, 2002 [1974]).

4   Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande & senzala. Formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal,* 48th ed. (São Paulo: Global, 2003). Originally published 1933.

5   Idem., *Sobrados e mucambos. Decadência do patriarcado rural e desenvolvimento do urbano* (São Paulo: Global, 2013). Originally published 1936.

were at the back, accessible from the outside, or outside in the often lengthy backyard. Doors along corridors and connecting rooms kept each space under different domains separate (but permeable). This is, as he calls it, the "social grammar of the Brazilian house."

DaMatta writes about the country's traditional house to discuss features of Brazilian society. As he says, many of these features may be found also in Iberic and other, especially catholic, societies. The house and the street (and he refers to the "other world," after death, as well) are treated as sociological categories, or moral entities, or spheres of social action, or domains of meaning and signification, or provinces of ethics, or cultural domains, not just geographical spaces and physical things. They are not just a stage where life takes place; they are social actors which reflect and mould all contradictions, ambiguity, and complexity of Brazilian society. In this sense, a person's behaviour, attitude, gesture, clothes, way of talking, and the like, change when moving from one space to the other, and back. The house code fosters family, friendship, loyalty, hospitality, and respect; the street code is associated with universal laws, but is also the place of the unknown, the impersonal, a public domain full of dangers and disorder.[2] Or, as Richard Sennett, seen in more detail further below, would say, the street is where "strangers meet."[3] DaMatta's emphasis on the "&" in the book title, he insists, designates this complex relationship. In this context, each concept can only be understood in view of the other.

Gilberto Freyre, one of DaMatta's references, was an influential and prolific writer who, during the first half of the twentieth century (and later), produced some landmark books about Brazilian colonial and imperial living. He shows how the layout arrangements of colonial and imperial houses in Brazil was a reflex of, or rather, the pillar of the power structure and of the economic, social, and cultural life of the time. The house introjected a systemic and rigid hierarchy that also articulated differences and conciliated conflicts. Freyre's *Casa Grande e Senzala* — literally, the main house and the slave quarters, instead of the official translation "The masters and the slaves" — discusses ways of living in the countryside, the heart of the slave-based, economic life of the time, dominated by the patriarchal family.[4] Freyre's *Sobrados e Mucambos* — "The mansions and the shanties" — is a follow-up book, set in the context of the transition between a rural and an urban Brazil, the latter being where administrative and commercial, in particular export-driven life took place.[5]

Little by little, the main house gave way to the urban mansion, when the country started to urbanize. Both the main house and the mansion were home to the elites of their time. Freyre argues that they both were keepers of the traditional, patriarchal families, places to guard women and the family's richness, like money and jewels. The opposition to the *senzala*, a place for slaves, and later the *mucambos*, a place for the urban poor, is interesting because it marked not only class differentiation, but also a racialized society. Notwithstanding, in both situations, there were

6 Ibid.

7 Idem., *Casa grande & senzala*; DaMatta, *A casa & a rua.*

8 Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, "Ghosts in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life,* vol. 2: Living and Cooking, ed. Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 133–143. See also Márcio Moraes Valença, "La Gioconda, a cidade contemporânea e os centros históricos," *Arquitextos*, ano 10, no. 117.02 (2010), https://vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/arquitextos/10.117/3378 .

9 Pierre Mayol, "The Neighborhood," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 7–13..

10 Ibid., 15.

11 Ibid., 13.

12 Ibid., 18.

intermediary spaces, like porches, kitchen, backyards, where the two opposing places came together, in an interdependent and complementary way.[6] Freyre's books are intriguing and controversial and attracted a lot of criticism, but most of his critics came many years after his main works were first published and so they all benefited from other alternative interpretations of Brazilian society. Perhaps his most significant contribution was to bring culture to the fore to explain the complexity of society at a time when no one else did. In the early 1930s, he addressed everyday life approaching oversensitive themes, like sex as a colonization method, using an anti-racist view to explain that Brazil had become a hybrid society, recognizing the civilizing contribution by blacks. For Freyre, as well as, later, DaMatta, the house established a standard of behaviour; it was a symbol of a way of living and domination.[7]

The discussion about the Brazilian case is paradigmatic in the sense that it establishes two apparently physical entities as "ghosts," as Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard would put it.[8] These entities are not easily visible and recognizable as lived and lively spaces, arenas of signification and social enduring experiences. People may use them, be in them and not realize that these are spaces endowed with special powers. Be that as it may, this is also true of any social and historical settings, not only the Brazilian one, although the house and the street—and the immediate surroundings, called neighbourhood, seen next —may have different meanings and play different roles.

Bringing the discussion to the French context in more recent times, Pierre Mayol presents also the "neighbourhood" as an intermediary space that attaches the private to the public space. It is a space of social commitment where people enact the "art of coexisting."[9] Proximity and repetition of acts and gestures shared with others render everyday encounters a banality. The price to pay is to behave according to a sort of a social contract. A neighbourhood is the space reachable on foot from home where immediate necessities, like buying food, having a drink with friends, or having a haircut, may be fulfilled. It is a space between home and the larger, unknown city. It is a space of establishing certain relationships and commitments with other people. There are certain conditions and implicit rules to be followed: a "*savoir faire* of coexistence," a "grammar of the body" that Mayol calls "propriety."[10] Behaving accordingly makes it a "place of recognition,"[11] otherwise, "what are the neighbours going to say?"[12]

In sum, thus defined, public and private (or intimate, or domestic) spaces have this apparently binary character; that is, it is binary at first sight. However, considered in DaMatta's terms, they are not opposites but complementary and closely related. Seen on its own, public space — including streets — has also a more obvious, non-binary sense. It is both a place of encounter and of passage, a destination and a way to a destination — physically and metaphorically. A public space *door* is thus a metaphor for elite urban-designed control gates or other socially and economically defined

13 For a full explanation on how this works under capitalist conditions see David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). Originally published 1973. Regarding elite segregation see also Mike Davis, *City of Quartz. Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 2006), chap. four, "Fortress L.A."

14 Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*.

15 DaMatta, *A casa & a rua*; Freyre, *Sobrados e mucambos*; Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*.

16 Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Verso, 1982). See also Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Idem., *The Urban Experience* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

boundaries. The city is not entirely accessible; although locations (with infrastructures, services, etc.) may be nearby, they may be accessible only to equals or at a price.[13] In sum, there is a sensorial aspect to private and public space, defined by the body and at various scales, mediated by culture, including class, economic and political positioning in society. Spaces reflected social relations and the class structure, but this can be said of most, if not all societies of the time (and of today), each with its own character.

Richard Sennett, also a sociologist, wrote *The Fall of Public Man*, a book about the private and public realms, spanning from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. He argues that the private realm allows friends to self-disclose intimacy and feelings, whereas the public realm is the place to join people but not relate to them as persons but as citizens. In the public realm, relationships must be impersonal. The city is the place for the public realm par excellence. The problem has been that, as from the nineteenth century, the private realm has expanded its boundaries, destroying or diminishing the public realm.[14] DaMatta recognizes that there are certain situations in which the house and the street mingle, like during certain festivities (birthdays, baptisms, funerals, weddings, and other religious events, in the house) or carnival in the street. These are moments when the two (and sometimes the three) worlds come together. Freyre sees an evolution in these terms due to urbanization, as public life gains more signification, in particular for women. Sennett laments the fall of the public man, as the space for the impersonal, just and fair citizenship becomes a place for personal interaction with all its vices.[15]

These examples suffice to explain that everyday life and space matters. However, many other contributions could have been called to the rescue. For instance, Marshall Berman uses Karl Marx's formulation to name his *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, suggesting that, under modernity, social and economic life must undergo much tension to fit the new modern times. He uses a Faustian (in addition to a Marxist) approach to discuss many themes related to the experience of being modern, in particular the spatial experience. Developments like the Haussmann's boulevards in Paris and Moses' road-like developments in New York define spatial experiences, in modern times, that promise everything to destroy it later. It is a progress of constant changes for the good and for the bad. Urban development in both cases accelerated urban life.[16] Be that as it may, how do people see themselves in these contexts? How do we see ourselves in places that were built decades or centuries ago, considering that much remains as "ghosts" in the city? Do we feel like wearing other people's clothes? Do we become insecure and anxious in face of speedy changes in our everyday lives? How do we see and feel ourselves moving (walking/biking/driving) in the streets?

After decades, centuries of human development, we have come to a time when the city is extremely segregated, and society is unfair and discriminatory. We all take part in it and have our parcel of blame.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

17   Harvey, *Social Justice*.
18   Valença, "Direito à cidade – qual cidade?" in *20 anos do Estatudo da Cidade: experiências e reflexões,* ed. Edesio Fernandes (Belo Horizonte: Gaia Cultural—Cultura e Meio Ambiente, 2021), 52–61.

What went wrong? The explanations are many; notwithstanding, the main idea in this text is that this situation is a social product of developments of the past and so acts at present as support to structure developments in the future. The situation reveals both the outcomes, be they good or bad, and the hopes for a better world; it reveals the causes of problems and ways out.

In *Social Justice and the City*, Harvey presents some clues for us to interpret this, which he pursues further in his later writings. It is necessary for public action to be compensatory towards the less privileged in society. Poverty and associated problems in the city are the result of unequal development, which causes poor distribution of wealth. Government action ought to compensate for that and the economic system in general has to offer rewards that result in fairer distributive allocation of income.[17]

Thus, an unfair society and a segregated city are what should be avoided in building the future. But how should this modified, more just, alternative society/city come about? Change requires emancipation and full participation; this is not an easy requirement in a competitive economic system. Be that as it may, Harvey is assertive in saying that to change the world, first we have to change ourselves. Enough is enough!

2

Not long ago, I published a paper on the quality of public space in Natal, Brazil, the city where I have lived for the last three decades (about half of my entire life so far), but all that I said in the paper could be said of my city of birth, Recife, where I had lived for the first half of my life.[18] All that I said, to some extent, could be said of many other Brazilian cities (if not all of them!), especially those in the Northeast and North regions, and lots of other cities throughout the world. In the paper, I wrote about the saga of walking in the streets of Natal, even in the more affluent neighbourhoods. I talked about the quality of sidewalks and the city's many other urban features. Leading the narrative was my young English bulldog, Missy. Sweet and eager to meet people and other dogs, she stopped at every opportunity to greet passers-by. Someone even called her "Missy congeniality," the neighbourhood's Sandra Bullock. Stopping here and there allows time for observation, and allows time to bond with other people. Ian, Marley, Logan, Mila, and Bruce are some of the many dogs we regularly encountered during our walks. Others were referred to as "the Dalmatian," "the four Shih Tzus," "the Brown and Hairy," etc. People without dogs that interacted often were called "the Three Aunts," or by their names, "Luciano the night watchman," when known. No intimacy, but friendly approaches. Walking and stopping, walking slowly, walking with no pressure of time allows a different look at life in the city. We just walked about the neighbourhood, at first randomly, and later following Missy's preferences. We were not looking for anything specific or special. We had nothing in mind but to stretch our muscles (and, for Missy, do her bodily things); however, we found lots of confusing meanings that became clearer little by little, each day.

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I had no idea of what conditions on the city floor were like until Missy came about. Like every middle-class person in the city, I drove (and still do for most of my daily routines) to get to places. However, walking gave me a new perspective on the city. The sort of walking I am referring to is different to that of going out on usual research field work. The former is free and random, follow no specified rules; the latter follows intent and order. In sum, in addition to all problems of poverty, inequality, crime and the sort, all that one hears on the news, Natal had (has) also a bad urbanism with terrible conditions regarding urban infrastructures.

Natal is a beautiful city in many respects, in particular regarding its natural geographic setting (dunes, beaches, forest, river, etc.). People from Natal — the "natalenses" — are usually nice, receptive, good people. However, the city has a very poor urbanism (and architecture — with exceptions). Street infrastructure (and of other public spaces) is bad even in the most affluent neighbourhoods. And there are many other features that deserve reproach as well. It is almost impossible to walk on sidewalks, but common people must do it every day. Walkways are irregular, missing, on different levels and using different paving and colours, which means that accessibility is poor and visually broken. The city is full of long, tall walls that protect the buildings with its security apparatuses, like nails and shards, placed on top, barbed wire, electric wire, cameras, sometimes many of these together. It is an arid city with few trees. The city's street infrastructure (pavements, floors, posts, street lighting, etc.) is badly built and poorly kept. Dirt, rubbish, and rubble are common features. All that is tolerable because the middle and upper classes drive. In addition to the experience of driving being a different experience from walking, both drivers and walkers get used to the landscape so as not to bother with or not to notice the city's problems.

Academic justifications for this situation may be many and truthful — politics, uneven development, poverty, government fiscal problems, corruption, lack of commitment, and so forth — but in the crude reality of everyday life, bad urban conditions in Natal are also a social outcome of people's behaviour. Only the few will attempt to do anything about it. How can this self-destructive behaviour be changed?

For at least three decades (since the entry of the 1988 Constitution into force), there has been a structured discussion on the *right to the city* in Brazil! This idea was incorporated into urban legislation, in particular in the making of participatory, normative municipal master plans and of participatory budgets. The right to the city is a strong concept with variable meanings. How can this be both strong and variable? It is strong because there is a forceful core of structuring elements attached to it; it is variable because it is adaptable to different circumstances. The core elements relate to empowering citizens of their natural rights and rightful obligations to decide about what is best for them as a collective being, including the nature and quality of urban infrastructures and convivial

19 Henri Lefebvre, *O direito à cidade* (São Paulo: Centauro, 2001) Originally published in Franch in 1968; Fernandes, *The City as a Common Good: a Pillar of the Right to the City* (Barcelona: Global Platform for the Right to the City, 2021), https://www.right2city.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Right-to-the-City-Bien-Comun_EN_OK_alta.pdf .

spaces. Citizens should be more able and attentive to determine what must and must not change in the city. Experiences of participatory engagement abound all over the world, but few are effective in becoming a "how to do it" policy. Participation rarely goes all the way to the actual design phase, less still to the execution or implementation phase. Henry Lefebvre, in his much cited "Right to the city" and in many others of his tens of books, means full engagement and empowerment to change the official, top-down view over urban planning, which he called "science of the city," which was practised in France and elsewhere in the post-war period. The expression does not refer to juridical right per se; it is more than that, it is like a claim for democracy with the city as a major player.

Later, the idea of the *right to the city* became an item of vocabulary in the grammar of public policy, or *the city as common good* (as noted by Edesio Fernandes), with participation arising to the fore of discussions and policy practice.[19] The common good (it is neither necessarily public- nor community-owned), the idea that things have no economic but other existential value, requires self-organization to come about, not any sort of participation. Not always has a participatory process been entirely free of government strings, but it has certainly served to raise awareness towards public discourse and policy interests. Participatory practices are always ways of learning, experimenting and perfecting policy and action. These are collective constructions.

3

C-F, or Clermont-Ferrand, is a town in France, heart of the Auvergne, where I lived for five months in 2022–2023. It is a place full of magic, surrounded by tens of volcanoes — 80 or so — with craters forming lakes, plateaus and the sort, a beautiful landscape rich in nature and history. It is the home of Michelin, which attracted thousands of Portuguese immigrant workers in the 1980s. The town's Gothic cathedral, built with black, volcanic rock, dates back to the twelfth century. Other churches, remaining walls, streets and buildings date from the same period or before, long before. C-F is the land of Vercingetorix (82–46 BC), who battled Cesar's army in Roman times; curiously, a general who is also depicted in Asterix books. C-F is also the land of Pope Urban II (c.1035–1099) and of Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), the well-known scientist, among other things. Vercingetorix, Urban II and Pascal literally mark the streets of C-F (figure 1). They are printed in steel plates and disposed on the floor, forming a trail. What the plates show are the streets that existed when those historic figures were around. Quite often, two plates, or sometimes the three of them, are placed on the floor of the same streets, almost always denoting antiquity, and continuity in time. Each plate indicates a walking circuit. Follow the plates and one can have an idea of what existed during the time of the figure on the plate. Missy and I explored all these streets, but in a disorderly manner. We followed no plates. We followed her instincts and nose.

fig. 1   Plates marking the streets of C-F historic centre. By the author.

20   Valença, "La Gioconda."

Missy, my English bulldog, is now (at the time of writing, first half of 2023) just over two years old, a lively young adult. We now go out three or four times a day for walks. At least one of these is a long walk to exercise and play. Her favourite place in town is the Jardin Lecoq. The others are shorter walks down the street for her to stretch (in C-F we lived in a small, overpriced place — an Airbnb — with only four doors) and do her bodily things.

Different to Natal, there are not many obstacles in the streets — even the narrowest ones in the *Centre Ville* — of C-F. No rubbish either. However, the historic town centre is known for smelling like urine. C-F is a university town and there are many bars and restaurants in the centre and around. I do not know what exactly goes on throughout the night. Dogs have certainly their parcel of blame. Although the streets are washed every day by a mechanized mini-truck, the encounter of floor and wall has to be washed manually with a hose, from time to time.

In yet another essay, I discuss this now mythic, idealized place called the historic town centre.[20] In the past, nobody went on with their lives buying touristic trinkets, shopping in trendy stores, and eating in fancy or customized restaurants in beautifully equipped, organized, and animated streets, squares, and parks. People lived in cramped, smoky households with no toilets and lacking other basic conditions. Outside, the streets were dominated by mud and animal droppings and the public space had to be shared with all sorts of domestic animals, pests, and parasites; plagues and several other diseases were common; crooks abounded. Fire was a constant fear, and the smelly streets might have been a torture considering today's standards. Overall, cities were not a healthy place to live.

But allow me now to ramble on with some thoughts. Hopefully, this twisting writing will reposition this narrative on track towards the end. In 1980, in his most celebrated text, Michel de Certeau evokes the quality of getting to know the city from the bottom, that is, from the street level.

21   Certeau, "Walking in the City," in *The Cultural Studies Reader,* ed. Simon During, sec. ed. (London: Routledge, 1999), 126–133.

22   Nigel Thrift, "Driving in the City," *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol.21, no .4–5 (2004): 41–59, 43. *Driving in the city* is a critical essay that adds to as well as points to potential problems in Michel de Certeau's work. Thrift argues that Certeau's "walking grammar" lacks "other languages." Certeau underestimates the role of the automobile experience in the twentieth century society (and up to date). The car has become a common feature of everyday life; the city is configured for cars, with service buildings, street lighting, and everything else. The car has become an extension of the body.

23   Certeau, "Walking in the City," 131.

Certeau begins by looking down the streets and urban scene of Manhattan from the top of the (now fallen) World Trade Center. A bird's eye view of the city is a panorama that reveals stable properties. They are stable only from the distance. This is almost by rule how planners look at the city: from top-down, on a map. But they do not see *the* whole; they see *a* whole, like a *voyeur*, that is, they see it, but they are not involved in it. They see it from a safe distance, but they do not see it all. Notwithstanding the technique's use and virtue, the city is much more than a panorama of streets, pavements, stoplights, squares, greens, flows of people and cars passing by, and all the rest of it.[21]

The walker subverts that logic and subverts power by reinventing and thus redesigning the city. Meanings are (re)signified. Order becomes ambiguous and displaced. Things may be here, but I can also go there, do it there. There is also life out there. People live at the street level. They go inside and outside, go up and down buildings, but there is life out on the street level. They walk! Even if a city is not too friendly for walkers, they have to come and go, get in and out their cars or public transport, get to places where their lives find satisfaction of needs. The street is not just a medium; it is not an "in-between" space. It is the space that amalgamates everything. But no one knows exactly how to explain this. It is a fluid space of tension and resolution. Its multiple interconnections are hard to read and explain. City dwellers write the city as they walk. Walking is a spatial practice. Each walk is a different writing. A city is made of fragments of trajectories and experiences, not readable. As Nigel Thrift writes, for Certeau, these are a "…diachronic succession of now-moments of practice which emphasize perambulatory qualities…"[22] There is no single identity. Every single movement forms a plural of unreadable, perpetually changing, interconnected practices. This lack of readability is a form of subversion.

The action of walking is powerful and political, no matter what new technologies — like GPS, street view, satellite imaging — can bring about. As Certeau writes:

> It is true that the operations of walking on can be traced on city maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths (here well-trodden, there very faint) and their trajectories (going this way and not that). But these thick or thin curves only refer, like words, to the absence of what has passed by. Surveys of routes miss what was: the act itself of passing by.[23]

In sum, walking is a rhetoric, a composition of parts, and not always comprehensible.

The academic literature is rich in discussions regarding moving in the streets of cities. Walter Benjamin on Charles Baudelaire, Guy Debord and the psychogeography *Dérive* of the Situationist International, Henri Lefebvre and his approach on the everyday life, Michel de Certeau and his

24 Nikos A. Salingaros, *Design Patterns and Living Architecture* (Portland: Sustasis Press, 2017).

25 Valença. "Cidade, cultura e transformação: ensaio sobre arte, criatividade e animação urbana," in *Cultura e cidade: abordagem multidisciplinar da cultura urbana,* ed. Fernando Manuel Rocha da Cruz (Natal: EDUFRN, 2017), 141–170, https://repositorio.ufrn.br/jspui/handle/123456789/22756 .

26 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 2005). Originally published in 1967.

down-to-earth view of walking in the street, they all argued that strolls in the city were/are a potentially potent political action. The flaneur, the voyeur, the stalker (as in the movie *Stalker*, director Andrei Tarkovski, 1979), the *déambulateur*, they are all meaningful concepts, each referring to specific situations, but all regarding walking and observing, finding the unexpected, getting to know the territory and the other, making sense of the world, participating in it, and, sometimes, intervening. Search for meaning, truth, happiness, manifest somehow, react, go to the streets (to protest, even!).

Cities are meeting places; streets are meeting places. Cities are the arena of diversity, thus an incubator of human creativity. What planners can do—not all planners, just the good ones—is to foster movement in the right scale. This is a down-to-earth approach or the opposite of a top-down, moving from the small to the bigger scale, keeping cohesion, or integrating one piece into the other. We have to move in the city at the various scales, but at the local scale we have to move by walking, walking slowly, as Salingaros says. For this to be enjoyable, streets, sidewalks, gardens, parks, all public spaces have to have ecological, cultural and ludic qualities. People should feel pleasure moving in the city, interacting with the city, the buildings, other objects (like street art), and passers-by.[24]

I did a lot of walking in other places that I lived — before Missy — like London (in 2014) and NYC (in 2015). I had different preoccupations and followed different directions then. For instance, in London I was very much concerned about street life regarding art of whatever kind, art as a survival strategy.[25] You find plenty of artistic expressions all over the place, in touristic and non-touristic places. Covent Garden, the Queen's Walk on the South Bank, the Underground, Leicester Square, Piccadilly Circus, just to name a few in very central locations, are animated every day by tens of artists. Musicians, jogglers, doodlers, comedians, magicians, sand sculptors, live statues, floor drawers, they and many others animate life in the streets of London. For a distracted person, art in the streets may seem just an amusement. You spend a couple of minutes observing and then go on with your life; however, it is much more than just that. It is chaotic in many senses, breaking conventions and the street circulation logic. It breaks also the top-down, elite-directed sense of art run by local and other levels of governments, that is based on urban renovations and urban entrepreneurial projects. Art in the streets is a pedagogy against the "spectacle" that Guy Debord defines as the ultimate form of alienation, a false consciousness.[26] In the context of extreme alienation, it is not possible to know whether what we do is libertarian or alienating. Notwithstanding, the combination of art and the streets serve to rejuvenate public spaces and urban landscapes so as to integrate further the community into doing things together, or sharing experiences, or just being nearby. There may be a greater symbiosis with the surrounding environment. It fosters free expression, breaks paradigms and established rules. Animated and vibrant

27 Valença, "A saga de Fester num oitavo andar em Manhattan: ensaio sobre a desigualdade na cidade contemporânea," in *O homem e o espaço,* ed. Oscar Federico Bauchwitz, Dax Moraes and Edrisi Fernandes (Natal: PPGFIL, 2017), 299–326, http://www.cchla.ufrn.br/ppgfil/PDF/livros/O%20Homem%20e%200%20Espa%C3%A7o.pdf .

28 As with several other cities I went to, I also went to distant neighbourhoods to see their infrastructure. In C-F, pavements and urban conditions are excellent everywhere.

29 Valença, "Direito à cidade."

streets make people wish to take time to live new experiences. They are a good environment to foster participation which may result in some sort of consciousness.

In NYC, a year later, I still cared about street art, but the sore number of homeless people and pungent inequality in such a rich place caught my eyes. Spectacular brand architecture popped up everywhere in the city, contrasting with conditions of living in the streets.[27] Calatrava, Foster, Nouvel, Hadid, Pelli, Maki, Portzamparc, Ingels, Viñoli, you name it, NYC has a great collection of Pritzker and star architecture. Thousands of people — around sixty thousand — had no place to live and had to go to shelters and other improvised arrangements to spend the night; many—around three thousand—could not find a shelter or preferred to live on the streets, in the shadows, small hidden spaces, the subway, Central Park. They spent the days pushing their supermarket chart with all their belongings inside, even in the harshest weather conditions. They had to keep moving until dark. They might have something to say about this experience too. In the streets of New York City, all sorts of people from all possible backgrounds circulate, as in most other big, metropolitan contexts. But it is always more in the capital of "opportunity," the main port in the US to have received migrants during the last two centuries or so. NYC is the extreme example of urban living; loads of people passing by each other, rubbing shoulders, sniffing their scent; however, they are all unknown and indifferent to each other and live in anonymity. The city is impersonal, risky, indeterminate. Under these conditions, fortuitous encounters with the other may be also cause for anguish, not pleasure.

To close this section, after this long, poorly planned ramble, allow me now to get back on track. Or, perhaps, not so much yet. C-F is full of straightforward paths, marks that guide through time and space. Plates, street art, old stylish doors, decent floors (pavements, brick roads, sidewalks), and dog pee, a lot of dog pee (and human pee too). Missy and I followed dog pee. After a while, you end up establishing a pattern; instinctively, you go where your trained mind tells you to go. You get used to the city and to the routes you traced. Novelty is only once. But we found much more than we expected to, and we had not expected much. What first caught my eyes when we first arrived in C-F were the beautiful doors, floors, and art on walls found in *centre ville*[28] (figures 2–4).

What first caught my eyes in Natal was the poor quality of paving on the street sidewalks. When I observed further, I noticed that most other urban features were also bad or lacking (figures 5–6).[29]

How difficult it is to realize what is going on! We live our lives on a daily basis, filling all basic needs, one by one, as much as possible. Here and there, now and then, we fill in some of our other desires. At the end of the day, we do not realize what our contribution to the common good is. But it is there. Work, work, work, they say, is what moves the world. Work is the road to success. Work is "dignifying." But work also moves

fig. 2   Doors of Clermont-Ferrand. By the author.

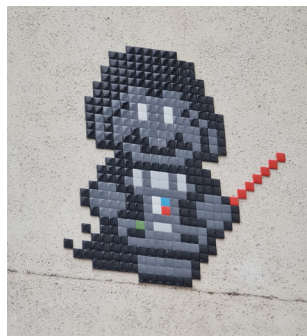**Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process**
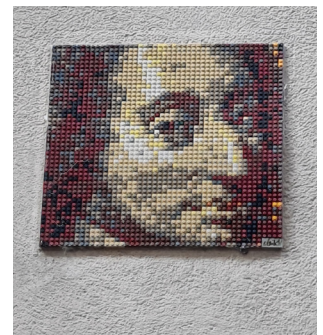
fig. 3   Floors of Clermont-Ferrand Centre Ville.
         By the author.

fig. 4   Art on walls and in the streets. By the author.

fig. 5   Floors of Natal. By the author.

fig. 6   Urban features of Natal. By the author.

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30 Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

31 Ibid.

inequality and is also the road to poverty. Under actual conditions, this has been an estranged, alienated labour. We create things, even cities, to survive; and because we do so, we also create the conditions that make the world what it is. The world is our creation, cities are our creation, in our own "image and likeness." Parroting Harvey, let us then change our image to change the world.

4

Another break in the narrative now. Hopefully, I will be able to make sense of all things discussed so far, or at least, indicate a path to a fuller comprehension of the potential role of architecture in changing the world and how that can be accomplished. After all, we are talking about architecture and its ways of proceeding. Reyner Banham — the visionary architectural critic and "historian of the immediate future," as Nigel Whiteley calls him in the subtitle of his book — may be of great support here.[30] I refer specifically to his idea about architecture and "the controllable or responsive environment." That means that buildings are made for certain uses and practices which may later be modified by users in many ways. What Banham says, analysing Cedric Price, is that the architect should be aware of this when designing and so must facilitate this process of adaptation. Experience/events should be facilitated by the environment. Buildings should be designed with this in mind: perpetual change. The technology of the day will allow it just as, later, new technologies will allow further unforeseen adaptation. Or rather, following Cedric Price, all architecture has a time to endure and must be pulled down after that.

So, appropriation of use is a form of participation, of approaching something that was created for someone else and/or for something else, incorporating its essential qualities and adapting to new uses and needs of one's own. That is a sort of incorporation and embodiment in two ways—you become part of the thing; the thing becomes part of you. This is a continuous process that can be done consciously or intuitively, sometimes without even noticing. You use it as you wish and that changes things.

Still, it is more than that. A *responsive environment* should be reactive; it should respond to stimuli, adapting to personal needs and desires. The user must have some choice and control over their physical environment, making it a controllable environment. A "controlled" environment—like the one that is produced by traditional architectural practice—offers a limited range of possibilities of uses; a "controllable" environment offers a larger range of possibilities.[31] Architecture should respond to users; thing should respond to want. Architecture and building should be flexible enough to serve also what will come next, what is not foreseen.

Buildings often remain or keep their physical characteristics for longer than their originally planned use. This is the same for the many elements of the city. As Whiteley writes:

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32 Ibid., 212–214.
33 Stanley Mathews, "The Fun Palace as Virtual Architecture. Cedric Price and the Practices of Indeterminacy," *Journal of Architectural Education*, vol.5, no. 3 (2006), 39–48.
34 Ibid., 42.
35 Whiteley, *Reyner Banham*,212.
36 Mathews, "The Fun Palace," 47.
37 Whiteley, *Reyner Banham*, 215.
38 Mathews, "The Fun Palace," 46.

Banham's views on the role of the architect were profoundly influenced by Price: both believed the radical model of the architect was that of *enabler,* in opposition to the Modernist notion of the form giver. The architect, pronounced Price, "takes his place in the ongoing process as a *provider of opportunities for experience and change* not as a master builder of immutable (and rapidly outdated, in terms of use) monumental structures" (my emphases).[32]

Cedric Price had designed *The Fun Palace* (circa 1961–1964), an experimental building, never built, one of the 1960s avant-garde experiments. The designed building had hanging auditoriums, movable walls, ceilings, walkways, blinds, and other special effects, like smoke, vapour barriers, warm-air curtains, fog dispersal, all that to create an adaptable building for different theatrical uses. According to Stanley Mathews, all activities were to respond to users' demands as determined by information technology of that time.[33] A computer would collect information from users and forecast possible adaptations for future use. For this to happen, Price and Joan Littlewood (the client artist) gathered a team of scientists from fields like cybernetics, game theory, anthropology, and the sort. The Fun Palace was to be a "virtual architecture," with an "indeterminate," "variable" programme that adapted to use. In this way, users would gain a sense of agency. For this to happen, the architecture itself had to follow some improvisation, in line with arising *situations*. The external appearance of the building was less important, looking more like a series of scaffolds being assembled or dismantled. An unspecified programme led to an indeterminate form. There were many indeterminacies and uncertainties so that change (reprogramme and reconfiguration), to a certain degree, had to follow chance. The idea was to develop a building that self-regulate, self-correct, and self-organize. Mathews call The Fun Palace an "adaptive virtual architecture." Its performative nature depended on the predictability of data collected and this would be operated by the latest computing technology, a would-be intelligent building. In sum, "...Price thought of architecture in terms of events in time rather than objects in space, and embraced indeterminacy as a core design principle ..."[34]

"Fun" was not mere entertainment; it followed a more libertarian, progressive approach: "active participation and involvement, stimulation, knowledge, and personal growth."[35] And that meant "...emancipation and empowerment of the individual."[36] Architecture could provide an ambiance for knowledge and practice that distanced itself from established professional dogmatic programmes. Architecture was finally to become a ground for "...active participation and experimentation."[37] In sum,

> Unbuilt, it [The Fun Palace] remains as a relic of the spirit of the 1960s, a moment of social and architectural discontent and expectancy in an era of seemingly limitless hope and optimism, a time when new modes of existence seemed within reach.[38]

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39   Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle. Spatial Dialectics* (London: Routledge, 1998).

Price and Banham also influenced many others, including the 1965 Archigram Control and Choice projects, in many respects. The celebrated group insisted that designers should not determine everything but leave it open for users who could turn switches to change the environment, in which case the building itself would be more than just a physical thing.

In a few words, the controllable or responsive environment was/is meant to bring architecture and urban design closer and more adaptable to always-changing human desires and needs.

5

I have so far avoided using the term *co-creation*, although this is the theme of this special edition of *Joelho*. Above, in sections 1 to 4, theory and reality were related to highlight concepts that are important in the analysis of the idea of *social justice and the city*. The construction of a fair society and city is far from becoming a reality. People have, so to speak, co-created a world full of problems. This has happened because of the way people participate in society, through engaging with the labour market, structured as it is by class relations.

For Marxists and leftist academics in general, participation is related to class struggle and the changing of power relations (social movements, conflict and revolution are means to change), and thus has been an issue for almost two centuries. In the 1940s, Henri Lefebvre elaborated on his understanding and critique of the everyday life, taking the debate away from the more general political and economic structures of power, later having as one outcome the idea of "right to the city," which appeared, in 1968, also as a homonymous book to celebrate the centenary of Marx's *Capital*. As mentioned in section 4, Lefebvre was opposed to what he called the "science of the city," based on a top-down approach to planning in which government technical personnel exerted power over the city. The idea of right to the city has been widely discussed and adapted to public policies in many places, but centrally it refers to the empowerment of citizens in decision-making processes related to their built environment.[39]

Co-creation has always been a practice of the past in the sense that all creation is a collective creation, for the good and for the bad. Notwithstanding, the notion of *co-creation* that was presented in the discussions of the previous sections, in particular those of the private and public space, the right to the city, Certeau's views about walking, and the *responsive environment*, is the one that is practised every day, whether people want it or not, when they collectively engage in society. When people are strolling (or moving) in the city, or when they demand to be heard regarding their needs, they are also transforming it, making it a social and political reality. When people go into a building or a public space, somehow that environment has to adapt (or to be adapted) to serve people's own purposes. This is also a form of co-creation. Put simply, everyday living instils co-creation. But more is required.

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40 Simon Varwell. "Literature Review of Arnstein's
Ladder of Citizen Participation: Lessons
for Contemporary Student Engagement,"
Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal,
vol.10, no. 1 (2020): 108–144.

Co-creation can also be fostered, as with intensive participatory processes defining certain features of what is being done or built by governments and/or communities (even the market). Co-creation must be a defining feature of contemporary public policies; it should feature high in public debates, defining outcomes of public policies and all that relates to them. But who must put it in place? How to engage all interested people in the process? How representative of society is a group of people participating in any decision-making process related to the design and implementation of public policies? How long should a process of participation and co-creation remain in place? More importantly, regarding buildings and infrastructures, how adaptable should they be to satisfy the social needs of those who took action in their making and the new interested parties in the near future? All these questions have no straightforward answers.

Co-creation is a relatively new term to public policy studies. It is more so in the field of architecture and urban design. In this regard, the fundamental idea of co-creation is to plan and build better solutions to address public problems collectively. Although this idea is not a novelty, being incorporated into so many other terms and concepts, it struggles against all odds to become a common practice in public policy and other institutionalized channels. Co-creation—in a few words—is *participation* in its ultimate form. The literature on this matter refers to different fields of study, like business and marketing, product design, health, and education, and is now well established and growing.

In the field of public policies, participation has been a discussion since at least the 1960s. Sherry Arnstein's "ladder of citizen participation," for instance, has had an immense impact on the design of public policies throughout the world. The ladder has eight rungs, ranging from no to full participation, or citizen power. Rung number 8 is called *citizen control,* and this is where *co-creation* should be located. Simon Varwell presents a systematic literature review of Arnstein's ladder in five important sectors of public policies ("planning and environment, housing, health, schools and young people, and higher education"), over the last fifty years, finally to focus on higher education and students' engagement in Scotland. The number of academic works citing Arnstein is overwhelming. There are critiques, adaptations, and complementation; there are new ladders, models, scales, schemas, wheels, typologies, matrixes, hierarchies, and circles. The influence of this seminal text is impressive.[40]

Participation has been a systematic feature of Australian public policies since the early 1990s, with different policy designs being set up over time. In present time, there have been experiments, such as the urban living labs of South Australia, in which products and services are developed as co-creation and in consultation with the community. Planning goals have been to design and strengthen inclusive decision-making that *informs, consults, involves, collaborates, and empowers*. In this way, communities mutate from being mere subjects of design to being partners

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41 Davis and Andrew also further examine Arnstein's ladder by relating to current practices in co-creation. See Aaron Davis and Jane Andrew. "From Rationalism to Critical Pragmatism: Revisiting Arnstein's Ladder of Public Participation in Co-Creation and Consultation," Eighth State of Australian Cities National Conference, (2018).

42 Interactive, spontaneous, adaptive, networking, self-organising are also words often used to describe co-creation. See Helena Leino and Eeva Puumala, "What Can Co-Creation Do for the Citizens? Applying Co-creation for the Promotion of Participation in Cities," *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, vol.3 9, no. 4 (2020): 781–799.

43 Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders & Pieter Jan Stappers, "Co-Creation and the New Landscapes of Design," *Co-Design*, vol.4, no.1 (2008): 5–18.

44 Sanders and Stappers, "Co-Creation," 16.

45 Leino and Puumala, "What Can Co-Creation Do."

46 Ibid., 782.

of design. But this process does not occur without tensions, like problems of accountability and political misuse to gain legitimacy. A related problem has been that the supporting literature on co-creation and participation has focused on tools and techniques, rather than outcomes and processes.[41]

Co-creation has also been a feature of product development. Product development gains from co-creation with interested, potential users. According to Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers, this is also called co-design, user-engaged design, interaction design, user-centred approach to design, etc., each term having a slightly different definition according to its context of discussion, which sometimes may be a bit confusing.[42] In any case, the relationship between designers, products and users is enhanced here, taking to changes in the design process, giving rise to a more sustainable, collective creative realm. The prevailing approach of putting together expert perspectives with the views of passive users (or users as subjects in consultation) gives way to a participatory approach in which users become partners in the process of designing. The whole idea of co-creation/co-design is not new (although the terms are new), but it has substantially changed its nature. The two terms may better be understood separately: co-creation involves any act of collective creativity; co-design has a narrower definition, meaning the collaboration between designers and non-designers working together. It is a specific instance of co-creation. All this has impacted the profession, having brought about greater diversity of products and processes, and added complexity. The role of professional designers, for this reason, has augmented, requiring greater social and technical skills (e.g., consider the development of generative design).[43]

About this debate, Sanders and Stappers also conclude, provocatively, that: "The domains of architecture and planning are the last of the traditional design disciplines to become interested in exploring the new design spaces…"[44] This may be true regarding the use of the term co-creation and novel procedures associated with it, but participatory design of urban and regional planning and policies has been in place since at least the 1960s. Helena Leino and Eeva Puumala discuss three more recent co-creation experiments in the field of urban development in Tampere, Finland. All experiments had their pros and cons: a housing project for four thousand people in the town centre attracted around four hundred and fifty participants, most of whom among the elderly; a discussion to foster inclusion among immigrants attracted thirty-five participants who did not always understand the process nor each other; the building of a public sauna in a derelict industrial district attracted a total of fifty participants, many of whom were young, smart (digital) participants who disappeared once the first setback came about.[45]

For the authors, in this process, the objective is that "… citizens and their participation are given a central role."[46] The prevailing rhetoric is that co-creation breaks hierarchies. This is neither a top-down, nor a bottom-up, but a multi-directional approach. The justification for its

practice in urban policy and development is to promote urban social justice and inclusion, granting accessibility to all interested people in a sustainable participatory manner.

However, experiments have shown that there are problems in executing co-creation processes. Outcomes of co-creation should be put into practice. Many processes originated and became popular as a means for governments to gain legitimacy, and this may be disruptive as, in this case, outcomes and delivery are not the same. This often happens in planning processes with a pre-established objective, like the housing project mentioned above. The process should be open ended, in which case, it is time-consuming, what requires a flexible timeline. The second case (immigrants' integration) benefited from this. Co-creation is no good per se*;* it is good when it delivers the outcomes it has generated. Participants expect results; not always are they trustworthy of the process. They are not the same; participating groups are heterogeneous. The imbalance of power determines who participates and who is heard, which means that co-creation does not necessarily address social justice and inclusion. A shift in power balance may help strengthen social cohesion. The digital turn may be handy with smart and informed citizens, but a shift in mentality and way of working is still in progress. Government initiators can also be a burden as they are bound by pre-existing laws and regulations, policies, standards, and administrative culture. Leino and Puumala write: "The rhetorical success of co-creation is undisputed. However, as a *practice*, its success requires more critical analysis through an empirical exploration of the *implementation* and *impact* of co-creation…"[47] In sum, for each stage or phase in a public policy and/or planning cycle (problem appreciation, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation), procedures should allow participation to take place. This is also true if a policy involves architectural and urban design. These procedures applied in every step of the cycle make the process long running and complex. Having said this, it might get easier when the whole process becomes part of who we all are. We should practise, learn, adapt, change ourselves. In this way, one day, all "co"s (co-diagnosis, co-creation, co-design, co-implementation, co-evaluation…) will be unnecessary: this will be an intrinsic characteristic of the whole process and of our lives.

Thus, co-creation as a process in public policy is in the making. The literature reveals a variety of models and definitions of what researchers as well as professionals consider to be *co-creation*. Regardless of all the existing theoretical and conceptual arsenal, to some extent, it is still an empirical matter. That is, it is experimental by nature, which means that one situation will always be different to the other. Having said that, even if the process of co-creation has its flaws or is not done according to the desires of every and each participating person, this will always be a learning opportunity for all. Enhancing it also fosters further engagement and the establishment of a more effective participatory culture. People share,

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respond, interact, elect, debate, demand, do things themselves... After all, nothing will never be perfect until it is remastered by people's own appropriation through use. When people use a space or something, both also adapt to each other; people and thing become someone/something else. They change; they interchange.

Closing remarks

In the previous sections, I walked through winding roads and streets, but they had many crossings. I referred to terms and concepts, supported by established theoretical backgrounds and important authors, as well as to certain conditions and practices in cities that point to ideas of human emancipation and to the potential role of architecture and urban design in helping the development of a more just and egalitarian society.

> door wall outside inside public private intimate domestic spaces house streets neighbourhood control gates boundaries accessibility proximity citizenship everyday life segregation discrimination social justice city urban landscape inequality emancipation development participation right to the city common good town centre planning decision making representation walking movement subversion flaneur voyeur meeting places diversity creativity interaction art in the streets spectacle libertarianism alienation free expression consciousness homeless anonymity encounter public policy estrangement labour work perpetual change endurance appropriation adaptation use need wish desire choice control agency improvisation situations indeterminacies uncertainty chance empowerment controllable responsive environment architecture urbanism design co-creation

All these terms and concepts that were used in this essay have something in common. Although they refer to different intellectual and disciplinary contexts, they have overlapping features which are critical to the understanding of the idea that society must evolve by establishing a more active, participatory culture in everyday life. People, if desired, must take charge of their own lives and of the immediate conditions of living of their surroundings.

Section 1—a more general narrative to settle the direction of this essay—introduces the idea of the *public* and the *private* by using the metaphor of a "door" or the many "doors" we encounter in our everyday lives. A door functions as a sort of membrane that controls, but does not necessarily impede, passage from one situation to the other. A membrane is always flexible and vulnerable. In this sense, it can filter as much as obstruct. So, it may allow passage of movement, light, sound, smell, air, all that the senses can detect, and of ideas, sentiments, cultural traces of a society, all that the mind can absorb and sort out. A door

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regulates who/what is admissible inside and/or outside. In this sense, a house, a street, a neighbourhood, in sum, a private or a public space is a place that sets a standard of behaviour. It sets apart as well as integrates apparently opposing worlds. Several well-known authors, dealing with different situations and contexts, were called to the rescue in support of this general idea.

In sections 2 and 3, a general notion regarding the *right to the city* is discussed. First, a presentation of the poor urban conditions in Natal, Brazil, reveals the petty things that are needed to generally improve the quality of people's lives. Pavements, signalling, street cleaning, tree planting, bus stops, and the sort, are basic and easy to deal with, but all too important to be neglected. A planner or a politician does not have to ask whether these are needed or not. No participation is needed in determining the need for these fundamental features, although participation may be welcome in determining the forms (location, design, implementation, etc.) that they should take. Differently, in Clermont-Ferrand, France, the quality of the infrastructure is a critical aspect of living in a positive way. People can walk, cycle, use public transport (free of charge on weekends), move freely. There are any number of meeting points where people can enjoy a conversation with or without a drink and food. In addition to that, people can enjoy art in the streets. Streets and art are both potent political entities. Walking, although forming a composition of parts that is not always comprehensible, reveals this potency.

One day, most new buildings and other infrastructure will be flexible and adaptable. We see already football stadiums that have moving, retractable roofs to allow greater or lesser ventilation or sun lighting; we see multisport pavilions that hold a basketball match at night and an ice-skating competition the next morning. But these are solely the simplest of the cases, driven by market forces. In the future, most buildings will be adaptable, just like Rayner Banham prescribed and Cedric Price proposed in the Fun Palace, in the early 1960s. The Archigram movement was also influenced by this trend, proposing the principle in their 1965 Control and Choice project. A building and a city can change by switching control levers. However, as with the Fun Palace, a building would only be able to adapt to a number of different uses. This is what section 4 brought to the fore: the concept of a *controllable* or *responsive environment*. Ultimately, this is an environment that self-regulates and self-organizes according to users' demands and needs. This can be done by moving walls, lighting, smoke, colour, etc. and controlled by technology. The so-called intelligent buildings of today use complex computing and software to adjust many of their features to need. Artificial intelligence will surely bring more novelty to this area soon. Flexibility and adaptability are crucial concepts to the discussion of participatory ways to foster the right social and physical environment for all. If a building or an infrastructure or a broader urban environment is to be useful to as many people as possible, it must be flexible enough to adapt.

Finally, section 5 discusses more closely the idea of *co-creation*, seen as the ultimate form of participation, as a tool in public policy and regarding all its phases or cycles. Architecture and urban design are the core of the paper's preoccupations. The section presents a discussion drawing on literature from different fields of study to understand the strengths of the concept of co-creation and its use for architects and urban designers.

In this text, we are mostly concerned with architecture and urban design, with how adaptable and socially useful a building or a space can be. As Cedric Price would say, it is not so important that the "carcass" of a building is beautiful—it is better if it is!—but this is not so fundamental as a starting point. The ultimate controllable/responsive environment that we need *as part of* our way out from an alienated society is one that adapts more easily to each one of us, to what we desire and need as individuals and as a collective being. And this is not an easy task to realize; and this is not always possible.

Whatever the intricate ways, streets and roads that must be followed, architecture and urban design are too important to be left out of any solution towards a better world.

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