JOE LHO

Journal of Architectural Culture

no. 15
—

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process
—

eldlarq

JOELHO

Journal
of Architectural
Culture

—

no. 15

—

**Architectural Design as
a Co-Creation Process**

—

Contents

Armando Rabaça
Department of Architecture,
University of Coimbra

Bruno Gil
Department of Architecture,
University of Coimbra

Co-creation and the Nature of Architecture

—

Chief Editors' Note

Contrary to the visual arts, in which the artist can remain in the *undisturbed peace of the work of art* and focus on his personal interests and preoccupations, negotiation is intrinsic to architectural practice and its processes. It takes place throughout the whole process, from the design brief to legislation, from the client's wishes to the official authorities, from the specificities of the programme to the users' expectations and cultural background, and from the multiple technical requirements to the specific approaches of the wide range of technicians. In short, architectural practice entails a constant process of participation and negotiation with manifold actors from the beginning of the design process to the end of the construction phase and, sometimes, to the conditions of usage.

Participative and collaborative processes are therefore in the nature of architecture, and when constructively and intelligently conducted, constitute a fundamental asset for the development of the design and the quality of the work. Clients, users, engineers, sociologists, and all the disciplines involved in the design can bring valuable contributions to the process and potentially lead the work to a better result. This intrinsic collaborative condition of architectural practice has characterized the discipline throughout its history, even if the network of actors and technical requirements implicated in today's practice is considerably more complex.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

If the collaborative condition of architectural practice is inescapable, the pertinence of the debate on co-creation in the growing complexity of the present reality lies, first, in understanding how and in what terms is it possible to balance today's multiplicity of contributions while securing their coordination and synthesis through drawing. In other words, the crucial point is to understand the extent to which these contributions may participate in the design without questioning the autonomy of the discipline and its specific form of knowledge, meaning the disciplinary properties intrinsic to architecture that allow a work of architecture to be classified as such.

The specific disciplinary knowledge in the architectural field is a technical and an artistic compound. This means that a central trait of architecture rests on its formalist dimension. The notion of formalism must be here understood not as mere morphological exercise, but as "structural form," in the sense of a practice in which drawing provides the basis and the means for the mediation and synthesis of the multiple requirements, circumstances and participations involved in the process. Hence, the need to constructively face the challenges and conflicts of co-creation from an agonistic mindset — that is by recognizing the added value provided by each of the contributions in the design process. It hardly needs to be recalled, however, that the use of drawing as a central methodological tool — which is at the basis of architecture and its disciplinary autonomy — is the role and responsibility of the architect.

There are two main reasons to call attention to the formalist dimension of architecture in an issue devoted to co-creation. The first is that participants in processes of architectural design other than architects are often unaware of the differences between the decorative and structural dimensions of design and tend to regard drawing (*disegno*) as an aesthetic layer superimposed on the work, rather than a structural tool central to the process of architectural creation. The second reason is that, in the present situation, the contemporary debate on architecture is subjected to multifarious, centrifugal interests and arguments that tend to dislocate the core of the discipline to a secondary plane. This dislocation is usually associated with intellectual pressures that very often impose an oppressive *either/or* binomial upon politically correct topics, leaving no space either for counterarguments or for intermediate positions: either you blindly accept every argument on one subject or you are labelled as an opponent of the cause. More often than not, these intellectual pressures assume an anti-formalist posture: either one is a formalist, hence oblivious to social concerns, or one is concerned with social issues and must reject every concern with form. This anti-formalist position means the dissolution of the very nature of the discipline, for it ignores the fact that such nature rests on a process of creation ruled by drawing, and that therefore, it forcibly implies an aesthetic dimension at its core. While believing that collective participation is a powerful tool in today's context, it is with this risk of dissolution in mind and a sense of critical negotiation of such intellectual pressures that we would like the reader to approach the subject.

Gonçalo Canto Moniz
Centre for Social Studies,
Department of Architecture,
University of Coimbra

Luís Miguel Correia
CEIS20, Department of Architecture,
University of Coimbra

José António Bandeirinha
Centre for Social Studies,
Department of Architecture,
University of Coimbra

Co-creation Processes to Rethink Architectural Design

—

Guest Editors' Note

The central theme of *Joelho* 15 is urban architecture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with a special focus on the way in which a project is revealed as a space for collective engagement. The processes of producing architecture and urban environments have always arisen from transformations brought about by the collective, i.e. by society. The city, moreover, is the space in which these changes are engraved in our collective memory, their origins embedded in cultural, social, economic-financial, and political phenomena, among others.

The intense social and artistic movements that emerged from the political struggles of the 1960s spurred many architects to seek new ways to conceive of the public as the ultimate consumers of architecture. Answers were sought to the challenges engendered by the urgent need to house urban populations who were living in precarious conditions; new paradigms for architectural education were being advanced, and the uses of public space in the city became a prominent concern. In response, architects were motivated to explore design practices that involved members of the public in the decision-making process, especially during certain of its stages. Architecture became more deeply embedded in human concerns with the contributions of Giancarlo De Carlo's pilot projects for Siena and Terni, the housing programmes developed by the Portuguese Service of Local

1 Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *JAIP*, vol. 35, no. 4 (July 1969): 216–224.

2 The University of Coimbra and the editors are involved in URBiNAT, coordinated by the Centre for Social Studies, with seven European cities – Porto, Nantes, Sofia, Hoje-Taastrup, Brussels, Siena and Nova Gorica. The URBiNAT project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 776783.

Ambulatory Support (Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local – SAAL), or the theoretical framework "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," proposed by Sherry R. Arnstein in 1969.[1] Nevertheless, this legacy was abandoned in the later 1980s and 1990s mainly due to an emerging neoliberal political model, the emergence of the star system in architecture, and the limitations of such participatory processes.

Today, political, sociocultural, economic, financial and, in particular, climate crises pervade the five continents to varying degrees. This has reawakened a need to foster greater dialogue between those responsible for spatial planning—architects, urban planners, and landscape architects—and the public, whether those who live, study, and work in a particular environment or are visitors to it. In this context, the promotion of urban regeneration processes is taking place both in the cities' central areas, in which tourists and a new generation of citizens are welcomed, and in their outskirts, with the aspiration of offering better conditions for the local communities. In many of these processes, citizens are being invited to participate along with design technicians to develop solutions. International institutions are playing an active role in challenging municipalities, academia, the third sector, companies and citizens to organize transsectorial and transdisciplinary partnerships in order to co-create processes and solutions to transform urban as well as rural contexts, by addressing climate and social challenges. The New European Bauhaus, Horizon Europe, the H2020 programmes and "Bairros Saudáveis" have funded projects, such as URBiNAT, that aim to activate an inclusive urban regeneration process in several European cities through the engagement of the local communities in the co-creation of their public space with nature, the social economy, education, sports, culture, among other dimensions.[2]

This openness of the citizenry to participative processes of urban regeneration has brought about a growth in public awareness of the issues associated with social inclusion and climate change, in the frame of the seventeen sustainable development objectives established by the UN (see https://sdgs.un.org/goals). Broadly speaking, participatory processes operate on the principle of combating inequalities and guaranteeing an inclusive life for all, as in the case of feminist, intersectional perspectives. The present-day practice of architecture is inherently linked to these global debates. As always, the city constitutes a privileged space where society's intentions for the future are expressed.

JOELHO 15 explores whether citizen participation in the different stages of the design process has, or may have, tangible consequences for the way the city is projected and experienced. In this sense, the seven papers selected address three main approaches related to theoretical positioning, critical review of historical cases and contemporary research and professional practices, complemented in some cases by interdisciplinary dialogue with knowledge areas that are relevant to the co-creation process.

Co-creation Processes to Rethink Architectural Design

The theoretical approaches are rooted in two meaningful, trans-European debates that rethink established concepts. On one side, the political approach of the right to the city anchored in the work of several authors, from the urban sociologists Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey to Michel de Certeau's views on walking and Reyner Banham's concept of the responsive environment. This debate is explored in "Doors, Floors, Street: Searching for Meaning in an Uneven Urban World" by Márcio Valença, where the co-creation concept is "seen as the ultimate form of participation, as a tool in public policy and regarding all its phases or cycles." On the other side is the architecture of participation debate explored by Hugo Moline through "Giancarlo De Carlo's Realistic Utopia: Critical Counter-Images within an Architecture of Participation," supported by De Carlo's texts, drawings, and projects.

The critical review of processes, projects, and works of architectural and urban design that are the result of participatory processes is highlighted with two contributions. "Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva pioneering participatory architecture in mid-century India and Sri Lanka," by Inês Leonor Nunes, as research that puts two modern female architects that were based in the Asia in dialogue, introducing not only the modern principles but also an innovative participatory design process. Also innovative was the SAAL process in Portugal, as mentioned above, due to the architects' political engagement with the democratization process in Portugal after the 1974 revolution and their will to create participatory design actions in more than 100 operations across the country. "Architecture from an alternative power: Participation and design in the Catujal Workers Estate SAAL Operation," by Rui del Pino Fernandes, João Cunha Borges, and Teresa Marat-Mendes, puts one of the less-known operations on the map.

Finally, contemporary and research practices are framed by two complementary dimensions. First are contemporary co-creative practices that include new models and tools for participation that affect action upon the city, developed in two opposite urban contexts. In the Danish public space, Nabil Zacharias Ben Chaabane, Nicolas Rodemann Lehmann, Nanna Maj Østergaard, Cecilie Jessen Hansen contribute with "Practice What You Preach! An Account of Urban Design from the Perspective of the Practitioner," based on the SLA projects that integrate participatory design to co-create nature-based solutions. In the Brazilian city of Recife, Bruno Ferreira and Fernando Diniz Moreira write about "The Emergence of Collectives of Architects and the Incorporation of their Practices in Institutional Projects in Recife post #OcupeEstelita," taking this case study as an anchor for the research. Secondly, pedagogical and research experiments that apply models and tools of participatory architecture were developed in Guimarães, a city in the north of Portugal, funded by the national programme *Bairros Saudáveis*. "Palace of Imagination: a Way of Co-creating with Children in Emboladoura Neighbourhood, Guimarães" reports and reflects on an action research project coordinated by the

3   Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till, "Introduction," in *Architecture and Participation* (Routledge, 2013), xvi.

authors, Cidália Ferreira da Silva, Gabriela Trevisan, Mariana Carvalho and Diana Gouveia, where children are engaged to co-create solutions for their "palaces."

The artistic, social and technical dimensions of architects' work, which left a mark on twentieth-century practices, have evolved accordingly to engage different forms of thought and knowledge, leading many architects to rethink their position regarding the architectural project. On the one hand, revision of the architect's role is now more necessary than ever to reflect on new epistemological and evolutionary aims, with attention to the ontological crisis of the city, as the low density of urban sprawl entails challenges to the city as an eminently political entity. On the other hand, the rethinking of architectural design practices is making the fragilities of the architect's education more visible, still based as it is in most cases on the artistic and technical dimensions, placing the social in a secondary role. There is still a fear of architects losing their autonomy and scientific knowledge due to the need for interaction with citizens and stakeholders. In fact, participation implies negotiation and conflict, but also an opportunity to clarify design methods and make the design process more transparent. In this sense, co-creation challenges architects to research, teach, think and practise other ways of doing architecture, because "participation is not just a catalyst for the transformation of the role (and eventual lives) of users, but also for the transformation of architectural practice."[3]

Co-creation Processes to Rethink Architectural Design

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

Doors, Floors, Street

—

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.

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.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

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

Doors, Floors, Street

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

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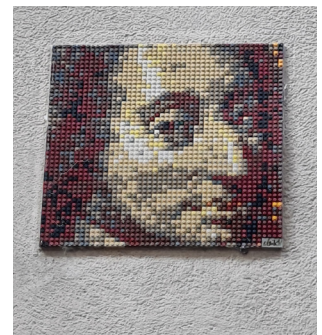
fig. 3   Floors of Clermont-Ferrand Centre Ville.
By the author.

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.

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:

Doors, Floors, Street

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]

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

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.

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

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

47 Leino and Puumala, "What Can Co-Creation Do," 785.

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,

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

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.

Hugo Moline
School of Architecture and
the Built Environment, University
of Newcastle, Australia

Giancarlo De Carlo's Realistic Utopia

—

*Critical Counter-Images within
an Architecture of Participation*

To seek a possible means to navigate the apparent divergence between participation and criticality in architecture, this paper returns to the notion of the "realistic utopia," developed by one of the leading early exponents of participation, the Italian architect, urbanist, writer and educator, Giancarlo De Carlo. Through a close reading of De Carlo's principal theoretical works on participation, in this paper it is argued 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.

The Critical 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 organization, 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. According to the budget, we design 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 twenty years I have been pursuing works of

1   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 *www* eds. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (Abingdon: Spon Press, 2005), 127–39.

architecture, art and research which collectively fall under this category. In the projects undertaken by myself and my collaborators, we 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 asking 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. 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 fifty years, the idea of "participation" in architectural practice has been a potent concept for architects looking to reshape their profession's social significance.[1] The notion that the people who use the built environment should be

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

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

3 For example: 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. Michael 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), 38–47; 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," translated 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); Ethically hidden from judgement: 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.

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).

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 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, utilized to placate opposition, and prevent rather than enable progressive change.[2] The perceived failure of participatory architecture to achieve its emancipatory intentions has been attributed 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. So-called critical practices of architecture have been judged equally ineffective at creating substantive change, unable to engage with 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]

As a possible means to navigate this question, and explore the potentials of Heynen's proposed hybrid of participation and criticality in architecture, I return to the notion of the "realistic utopia" developed by one of the leading early exponents of participation, the Italian architect, urbanist, writer and educator, Giancarlo De Carlo (1919–2005). I argue that beyond a nostalgic search for origins, De Carlo's writings provide concrete tools for architects practising today.[7] While recent authors, such as Miessen, position their critique of participation and its potential "critical" reformulation as a novel enterprise, I argue for a recognition of the deep roots of criticality in the work of early pioneers such as De Carlo.

Giancarlo De Carlo's Realistic Utopia

5   Heynen, "Intervention in the Relations of Production."

6   Ibid., 46.

7   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 Sixtieth Anniversary Conference: Reimagining Planning in the Urban Global South, July 2–4, 2014.

8   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.

9   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.

10 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.

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 writing on De Carlo have noted that 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.[8] De Carlo himself was evidently frustrated by this.[9] He expressed reservations about the term almost as soon as he began discussing it, commenting in 1976: "The term 'participation' now covers a wide variety of meanings and the most suspect of intentions."[10] The ambiguity and misuse of the term continues to this day. While the radical levelling 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
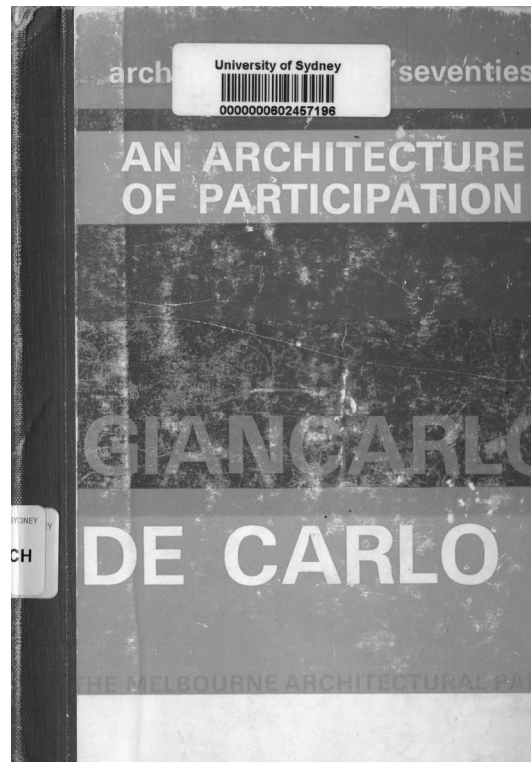

fig. 1   Cover of the 1972 publication of *An Architecture of Participation.* Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation.* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1972).

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

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

12 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.

13 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): 111–27.

14 The idea that De Carlo's formulation was an explicitly critical one has been argued by scholars such as Pelin Tan. See 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.

15 De Carlo, "Altri appunti*,*" 50.

practices with widely ranging agendas.[11] A common thread can be followed 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.[12] 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.[13] 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.

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.[14] 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."[15] 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.[16]

While 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.[17] 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. 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. As a complex

16 "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." Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*. (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter, 1972), 25.

17 For example, see Giacomo Polin, "Inside an Outsider," in *Giancarlo De Carlo. Schizzi inediti,* 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: Sara Marini, "Introduzione: Scegliere la parte" in L'architettura della partecipazione, comp. Sara Marini (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015), 14.

18 The oration was given hours after the public memorial service for Boyd: Neil Clerehan. "Editors note," in De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, iii.

19 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).

20 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.

21 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 architect," 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.

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

conceptual device 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 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.[18] 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*.[19] De Carlo summarizes 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.[20] In his own contribution, De Carlo revisited much of the same content of his 1970 article "Il pubblico dell'architettura" (Architecture's Public).[21] Here he situated 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 (figure 1) and De Carlo would later work with the publisher, Il Saggiatore, to publish Italian translations of the three talks in a single compilation.[22]

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 the same three interconnected phases. The crucial addition 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.

The context of late 1960s and early 1970s in which De Carlo was writing was one in which utopian and speculative forms of architectural projections were highly visible, particularly through the work of protagonists

23 Alexandra Brown, "Radical Restructuring: Autonomies in Italian Architecture & Design 1968–73" (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 2014), 83–141.

24 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.

25 Brown, "Radical Restructuring," 130.

26 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.

27 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.

28 De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 9.

such as the radical Florentine groups Archizoom and Superstudio and the London-based Archigram, among many others. De Carlo was well aware of these practices. In the highly controversial 1968 Triennale which De Carlo curated, alongside works by his Team 10 colleagues 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 distopian "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 Fourteenth Triennale and the "New Domestic Landscape" exhibition in her thesis.[23] 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."[24] 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."[25] 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 aestheticizing the notion of "disorder."[26]

Certainly, there was a deeper correspondence of ideas, both in terms of "utopia" as well as "participation," with the diverse practices and ideologies gathered under the banner of Team 10. 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."[27] 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.

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. *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.[28] De Carlo contrasts the "compulsive need to eliminate people" in modern architectural publications with the forms of

Giancarlo De Carlo's Realistic Utopia

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

30   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.

31   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 in not a building: The anarchitecture of Giancarlo De Carlo" in Giancarlo De Carlo: Percorsi, edited by Francesco Samassa (Milan: Il Poligrafo, Venice: IUAV Archivio Progetto, 2004).

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

33   De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 8.

representation that pre-dated "the appearance of perspective (the individual mono-centrism of vision)." In these earlier representations, which lacked a singular prioritized 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."[29]

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 the topic "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."[30] It is an architecture of total freedom and total equality, the structure of a particular kind of politics.[31] 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 big difference."[32] 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 previous writings, 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."[33] 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.

34 De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25.
35 De Carlo, "Il pubblico," 10.
36 De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 26.

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.[34]

De Carlo's conception of the realistic utopia can be understood as operating 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 emphasizes 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."[35] 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.

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 unrealized 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.[36]

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."

37 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.

38 For example: "[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.

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

40 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," 69.

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. 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 destabilize 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 alternative which is able to grow as a challenge to the structures from which it had developed.[37] Taken together, the notions of images having effects to highlight contradictions, and of these contradictions being the primary site for these images to operate, form the articulation of 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.[38] 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.[39] 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 conceptualized as the social reality: "the context is the whole pattern of social forces, with all its conflicts and contradictions."[40]

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

41   De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 25–26.
42   De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 37.

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.[41]

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 reformulation of practice towards participation, here it is related to the organization 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, would replace the traditional design phase. In "Il pubblico," 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.[42]

Each "alternative" and "solution" here can be understood as a form of the realistic utopia, never constructed in isolation but always in direct

Giancarlo De Carlo's Realistic Utopia

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 (figure 2).

The schema of process planning allows us to consider the implications of the realistic utopia beyond images to actualized 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 it 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:
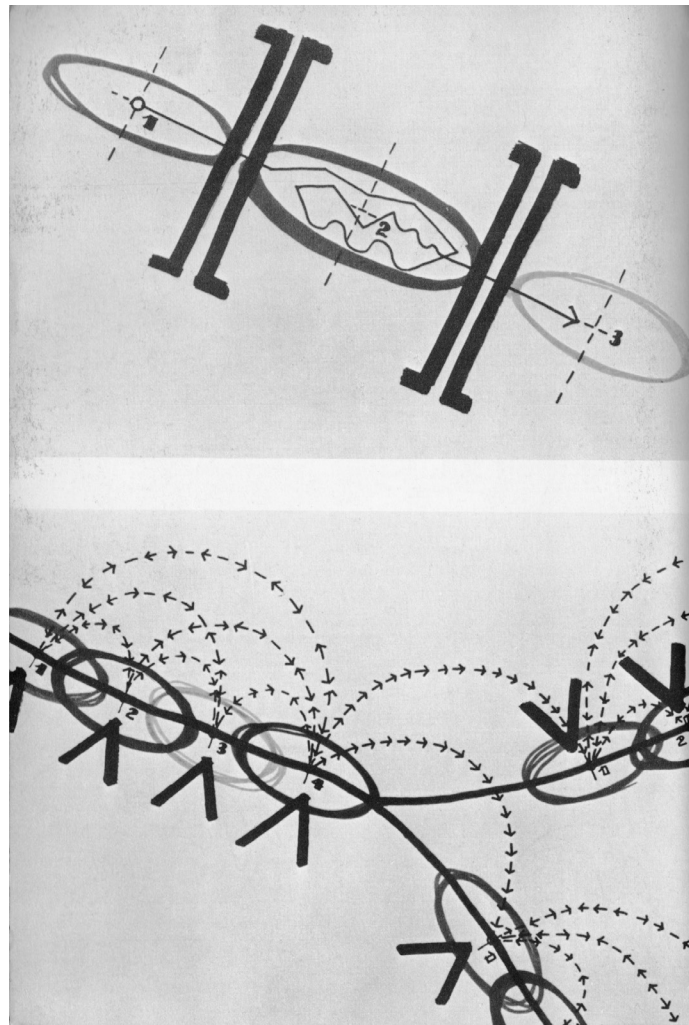

fig. 2 Images from the 1972 publication of *An Architecture of Participation*. The two diagrams contrast the "linear" process of "authoritarian planning" (above) versus the iterative and interconnected process of an architecture of participation (below). Source: Giancarlo De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 34.

43   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.

44   De Carlo, *An Architecture of Participation*, 12.

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.[43]

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.[44]

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.

An Expanded Notion of the Realistic Utopia

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 in understanding 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. In order to understand how the realistic utopia can

45 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): 55.

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 the inherent conflicts of a project visible 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.

Through the realistic utopia, De Carlo framed the role of the architect as a producer of critical-propositional images which simultaneously called into question the basic elements of budget, programme and location and proposed alternate physical, environmental manifestations of these factors. Crucially, these images were provisional and open to criticism by the participants, thereby raising further questions and generating further images in response. Through this iterative, cyclical process, the complexity of reality could be incrementally revealed, making the realistic utopia a means by which reality could be critically understood and potentially transformed.

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 to operate without being subsumed and appropriated, as made clear through the work of Tahl Kaminer, Fran Tonkiss and others. 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.[45] 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.

My original intention 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

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

has been steadily eroded by project managers and others. 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. 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 channelled our discussions with various sectors of the public 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 landowners, each element has been 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, it 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, each tasked with continuing discussions with the diverse public of this site, proposing new uses, forming new collectives and augmenting the public space over a period of twenty years. In this way, while our original "hypotheses" may never bear fruit, the process of realistic-utopian-production will, we hope, roll on.

Inês Leonor Nunes
Department of Architecture,
University of Coimbra, Coimbra

Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva Pioneering Participatory Architecture in Mid-Century India and Sri Lanka

—

Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva made significant contributions to the architectural field, namely to the broader frameworks of the mid-twentieth-century Modern Movement and tropical architecture. They also pioneered inclusive design processes, in line with the discussion of human factors that was just starting to fuel the architectural agenda. Peons' Village in Chandigarh and Watapuluwa in Kandy are housing schemes resulting from participatory methodologies where both architects promoted dialogue with the populations and integrated regional specificities. The collective engagement, which occurred at different project stages, effectively involved future inhabitants in decision-making and is reflected in the outcome of the projects. Drew and De Silva's socially engaged architecture envisioned project design as a co-creation process, contributing to redefining the architect's role, and aiming to foster a more equitable urban environment toward a better society.

1 Royal Institute of British Architects.
2 Le Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne or International Congress of Modern Architecture.

Introduction

This paper builds on the life and work of the British architect Jane Drew (1911–1996) and the Ceylonese architect Minnette De Silva (1918–1998). The research is part of my ongoing PhD thesis, entitled "The Social within the Tropical: The Community Engaged Architecture of Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva," which I have been developing, for the past two years at the University of Coimbra, in Portugal. My thesis explores the architectural approaches of Drew and De Silva within the Modern Movement and tropical architecture frameworks, developed since the establishment of their practices before the mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, it particularly emphasizes the pioneering participatory methodologies, including future users, that both architects led during the mid-1950s. This socially engaged approach to architecture is highlighted through two case studies: Peons' Village in Chandigarh, India, by Jane Drew, and the Watapuluwa housing scheme in Kandy, Sri Lanka, by Minnette De Silva.

In the first stage, the methodologies employed included a thorough analysis of Drew and De Silva's archives. Regarding Jane Drew, the Fry & Drew Papers, accessible in the RIBA Architecture Study Rooms of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, are the main reference for studying her legacy.[1] They contain invaluable archival material, the majority unpublished, in particular Drew's autobiography. In the absence of a formal archive, Minnette De Silva's autobiography is the key textual primary source. *The Life and Work of an Asian Woman Architect* was posthumously printed in a single edition, in a lively scrapbook format, and documents De Silva´s remarkable contribution to the Ceylonese, Asian, and worldwide architectural ground. Indeed, the autobiographies of both architects serve as the chief reference for this paper, and any unstated source should be understood to refer to them. The collection of primary sources encompassed a second phase of fieldwork in the two case studies. During my trips to India and Sri Lanka, I visited the remaining legacy of Drew in Chandigarh and De Silva in Colombo and Kandy. Comprehensive studies of the Peons' Village and Watapuluwa were complemented by interviews with the owners of the houses. The subsequent phase involved visits to additional archives, adding depth to the research endeavour. At the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, I explored the Pierre Jeanneret and Aditya Prakash fonds, with material of foremost importance about the Chandigarh project. Additionally, in the gta archives at ETH Zürich, I consulted documents related to the CIAMs, fostering a nuanced understanding of the social dimensions intertwined with the architectural narratives.[2]

Concerning the structure, firstly I will introduce the two key figures of the article, providing a literature review and contextualizing their participatory approach within the broader architectural scenario. Afterward, the focus of the article will be on the case studies. The chapter will delve into Drew and De Silva's participatory processes

3   The Modern Architectural Research Group, founded in England in 1933.

4   Anooradha Siddiqi, "Crafting the Archive: Minnette De Silva, Architecture, and History," *The Journal of Architecture* 22, no. 8 (17 November 2017): 1299–1336.

5   The Modern Architectural Research Group, founded in India in 1946. Marg in Sanskrit also means "the way forward." See Rachel Lee and Kathleen James-Chakraborty, "Marg Magazine: A Tryst with Architectural Modernity," ABE *Journal*, no. 1 (May 1, 2012).

and methodologies, highlighting the differences between their approaches and detailing the specificities of both projects regarding decision-making strategies.

This paper has the objective of exploring the still overlooked work of Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva, and therefore contributing to the growing scholarship that has been steadily unveiling the broader work of women architects, and more specifically those who were active during the twentieth century. Furthermore, in line with my PhD investigation, researching Peons' Village and Watapuluwa discloses Drew and De Silva's socially engaged approach to design, and highlights the projects as pioneering processes regarding citizen participatory design. As part of the tropical architecture framework, it demonstrates that social concerns, and not merely climatic factors, were present in the development of this adaptation of the Modern Movement to the climate of the tropics and moreover, that women architects were equally involved.

Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva

Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva shared time and places. They were both born at the beginning of the twentieth century—Jane Drew in England, and Minnette De Silva in Ceylon, currently Sri Lanka. Most of Drew's life was centred in London while extensively travelling, building a worldwide legacy. She worked mainly with her husband and lifelong partner Maxwell Fry, a crucial figure of the Modern Movement in England. They both belonged to the MARS Group, the British branch of the CIAM.[3] In parallel, Minnette De Silva was born and raised in Kandy, a small town in the highlands of the Central Province in Sri Lanka, nestled between greenery-covered mountains and a central lake. In Kandy, De Silva also founded her lifetime office, from where she designed the thirty buildings that constituted her legacy.[4] De Silva built exclusively on her native island, mainly in Colombo and Kandy. She worked mostly as a solo practitioner, accommodating only a few assistants, sporadically, throughout the years. However, she belonged to a major movement entitled MARG.[5] Based in Bombay, its namesake magazine is still published today. She commuted primarily between Kandy and Europe, seemingly disconnected from the Sri Lankan architectural community. She regularly embarked on long trips, spending significant time abroad.

De Silva started her architectural studies in Bombay, only later completing them at the Architectural Association of London (1945–48), where Jane Drew graduated in 1934. During the 1930s, Drew's education remained officially in Beaux-Arts, despite the Modern Movement ideas were already flourishing, and later fully established during De Silva's study years. Hence, they both became affiliated with the modernist principles, namely due to their close relationship with Le Corbusier. He became a friend and an inspiration, whose influence is reflected in both architects' projects. Additionally, Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva participated in

fig. 1   CIAM 6, Bridgewater, 1947. Jane Drew (first row, centre, dressed in white) and Minnette De Silva (two chairs to the right). RIBA Collections.

the major architectural events of their time, namely the CIAMs of 1947 in Bridgewater, and of 1953 in Aix-en-Provence. They possibly met in the former, which De Silva attended as a student and a *Marg* magazine representative (figure 1). Being excellent networkers, they smoothly moved within similar social circles, connecting with the brightest minds of all arenas.

Drew and De Silva were also scarce women architects practising in the mid-century. Therefore, they faced general antagonism in the male-orientated architectural field. This group of women architects becomes even scarcer if considering only those operating in non-Western/non-white territories. As mentioned earlier, De Silva built exclusively in Sri Lanka, with the greater part of her legacy dedicated to single-family dwellings. In contrast, Drew devoted herself dearly to programmes within the health and social spheres, despite her building portfolio including a panoply of other typologies and functions, signing projects in several countries. The list includes Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Ghana, and Nigeria (the former British West Africa), and also India, Iran, Kuwait, Mauritius, Gibraltar, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, England, and Sri Lanka. Most of these countries are located in the band between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, generally designated as the tropics. As such,

Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva Pioneering Participatory Architecture

6   Dennis Sharp, "Registering the Diaspora of Modern Architecture," in *The Modern Movement in Architecture: Selections from the* DOCOMOMO *Registers* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2000).

7   See Mary Vance, *Tropical Architecture: A Bibliography*, Architecture Series–Bibliography; A-738 (Monticello: Vance Bibliographies, 1982); Jiat-Hwee Chang, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Colonial Networks, Nature and Technoscience* (London: Routledge, 2016).

8   For further development of this topic, see Inês Leonor Nunes, "Women Architects Disrupting Tropical Modernism: The Socially Engaged Work of Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* XXXIV, no. II (Spring 2023): 7–22.

9   Sigfried Giedion, *Architecture, You and Me; the Diary of a Development* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1958).

10 Minnette De Silva, "A House at Kandy, Ceylon," *Marg* (June 1953), 4.

11 Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre, and Bruno Stagno, eds., *Tropical Architecture: Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization* (Chichester; New York; the Netherlands: Academy Press, 2001); Lefaivre and Tzonis, *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World* (Munich; New York: Prestel Pub, 2003).

12 Architectural Association School of Architecture.

13 Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry, *Village Housing in the Tropics* (London: L. Humphries, 1947); Idem., *Tropical Architecture in the Humid Zone* (Batsford, 1956); Idem., *Tropical Architecture in the Dry and Humid Zones* (B.T. Batsford, 1964).

14 De Silva, "Architecture in Sri Lanka," in *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*, 18th ed. (London, 1975), 86–145.

15 Stephen Hitchins, *Fry, Drew, Knight, Creamer: Architecture* (London: Lund Humphries, 1978).

16 Hannah le Roux, "The Networks of Tropical Architecture," *The Journal of Architecture* 8, no. 3 (1 January 2003): 337–54; Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, "Modernism in Late Imperial British West Africa: The Work of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, 1946–56," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65, no. 2 (2006): 188–215; Ola Uduku, "Modernist Architecture and 'the Tropical' in West Africa: The Tropical Architecture Movement in West Africa, 1948–1970," *Habitat International* 30 (1 September 2006): 396–411; Jacopo Galli, "A Cosmopolitan Manual in Decolonizing Africa: Fry&Drew's Tropical Architecture in the Dry and Humid Zones," *SAJ - Serbian Architectural Journal* 8, no. 2 (2016): 193–216.

when the Modern Movement spread its wings from Europe to the world in the afterwar modern diaspora,[6] the adaptation of the modernist language to the local climates of these new regions was called tropical architecture.[7] Having extensively practised in these climates, Drew and De Silva are associated with the tropical architecture modernist 'branch'. Indeed, close attention to the local climate and to the natural factors of the places that they were building in is a predominant aspect of their architectural language.

However, despite being affiliated with the Modern Movement and tropical architecture, their approaches offered different perspectives.[8] By integrating regional idiosyncrasies, namely the people and their traditions, as well as autochthonous material practices and objects, and, even further, other artistic forms as pledged by Sigfried Giedion's concept of "synthesis of the arts," they took the first steps towards what was later called regionalism.[9] De Silva called her first commission, Karunaratne House, "an experiment in Modern Regional Architecture in the Tropics."[10] Her line of thought is credited with anticipating critical regionalism by three decades.[11]

Brief Literature Review

Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva led the way with a series of first-time achievements that challenged the instituted patriarchal discipline of architecture. Jane Drew was the first woman professor at Harvard and MIT Universities; the first woman to preside over the AA of London; and the first woman on the RIBA council.[12] Minnette De Silva was RIBA's first Asian woman associate; the first Asian representative in the CIAM; and the first women architect in Sri Lanka, as well as the country's first modernist architect. Apart from these pioneering achievements, and their significant building legacy, Drew and De Silva also assembled a robust published portfolio. Drew is co-author of *Village Housing in the Tropics* and *Tropical Architecture in the (Dry and) Humid Zone(s)*, seminal books regarding tropical architecture.[13] Conversely, De Silva's written oeuvre was also a vital component of her career. In addition to her autobiography, I highlight the eighteenth edition of *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*, where De Silva wrote the chapters about Southeast Asia, while lecturing at the University of Hong Kong.[14]

Accordingly, their theoretical and practical contributions throughout careers of almost half a century, are in dissonance with the attention received from architectural historiography. Jane Drew has a monograph showcasing the firm's body of work written in the late 1970s.[15] Regarding her work with Maxwell Fry, a crucial and more recent book is *The Architecture of Edwin Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew: Twentieth Century Architecture, Pioneer Modernism and the Tropics*, by Iain Jackson and Jessica Holland. Also, important articles were written mentioning Drew and Fry's work in West Africa.[16] Likewise, Minnette De Silva's legacy is

17 Ellen Dissanayake, "Minnette De Silva: Pioneer of Modern Architecture in Sri Lanka," *Orientations,* 1 January 1982; AA School of Architecture, *David Robson – Minnette de Silva: The Life and Work of an Asian Woman Architect,* 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4jkqhli8iu (10–12–2023); Tariq Jazeel, "Tropical Modernism/Environmental Nationalism: The Politics of Built Space in Postcolonial Sri Lanka," *Fabrications* 27, no. 2 (4 May 2017): 134–52; Shiromi Pinto, "Reputations: Minnette De Silva," *The Architectural Review* 1463 (August 2019): 110–13.

18 Siddiqi, "Crafting the Archive."

19 Kiran Joshi, *Documenting Chandigarh: The Indian Architecture of Pierre Jeanneret, Edwin Maxwell Fry, Jane Beverly Drew* (Ahmedabad, India; Chandigarh, India; Wappingers' Falls, ny: Mapin Pub.; Chandigarh College of Architecture, 1999).

20 Iain Jackson, "Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew's Early Housing and Neighbourhood Planning in Sector-22, Chandigarh," *Planning Perspectives* 28, no. 1 (31 January 2013): 1–26.

21 David Robson, "Andrew Boyd and Minnette de Silva," *matter* (blog), 4 March 2015, https://thinkmatter.in/2015/03/04/andrew-boyd-and-minnette-de-silva-two-pioneers-of-modernism-in-ceylon/ (10–12–2023).

22 "C.I.A.M. 6," ciam 6, https://www.ciam6.co.uk/ (10–12–2023).

23 Elisa Dainese, "From the Charter of Athens to the 'Habitat': ciam 9 and the African Grids," *The Journal of Architecture* 24, no. 3 (3 April 2019): 301–24.

24 "Annexe: Liste des Grilles Presentees au ciam 9," 42-jt-x-1, gta Archives, eth Zurich. See also Inês Leonor Nunes, "Towards La Charte de l'Habitat: Jane Drew pioneering a 'more humane architecture' in Chandigarh," *CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios* 47 (29 December 2023).

also addressed by a handful of authors.[17] I underscore the more recent contribution from Anooradha Siddiqi, entitled *Crafting the Archive: Minnette De Silva, Architecture, and History*.[18] Regarding the case studies, Kiran Joshi assembled a broader documentation covering the contributions of the senior architects of the Chandigarh project, arguably the most significant piece of literature about Drew's work in the Punjab capital.[19] More specific, and exclusively dedicated to Drew and Fry's work in Chandigarh, is the article by Iain Jackson about Sector 22.[20] Unquestionably, De Silva's autobiography is the primary source about Watapuluwa. In addition, only David Robson's article on the online platform Matter is worth mentioning.[21] These academic voids vis-à-vis Drew and De Silva, especially about the case studies, are an ongoing investigation whose comprehensive insights will be further explored in my phd thesis. This article offers an overall preview.

Context

In the aftermath of World War ii, the world faced financial crises, political instability, and urban chaos. The post-war devastation resulted in disbelief in the ideals of progress and modernity associated with the antebellum optimism and the Modern Movement ideology. Concurrently, the conflict exposed humanity's fragility, sparking a renewed curiosity about human life. This interest prompted the emergence of social sciences and the flourishing of human rights movements. This transformative period urged the establishment of a new order, prioritizing humaneness, an important shift for understanding Drew and De Silva's participatory initiatives.

In the realm of architecture, a transformative wave also emerged. A rising generation of young practitioners, contesting the industrial methods and massive complexes that marked the Modern Movement post-war housing reform, aspired to more socially engaged ideals. ciam, the major stage of architectural debates, served as a barometer for these changes. Gradually, beginning in the post-war ciam 6, and intensifying until ciam 9 and 10, *La Charte d'Athènes* and the implicit functionalist city gave place to a debate around *La Charte de l'Habitat*. The concept of "habitat" encapsulated a novel theoretical discourse to "work for the creation of a physical environment that will satisfy man's emotional and material needs and stimulate his spiritual growth," advocating for a more humane architecture.[22] Notably, ciam 9 also witnessed a decentralization of the architectural field beyond the Western sphere.[23] Among other territories, Africa was presented, and Drew introduced Chandigarh.[24] Overall, these evolving ideologies laid the foundation for solidifying the social function of architecture as a powerful tool to frame the individual in society. Supported by the rising human sciences, architecture's new interdisciplinary and holistic approach started to prioritize links with other domains, namely sociology and anthropology.

25 Jackson and Jessica Holland, *The Architecture of Edwin Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew: Twentieth Century Architecture, Pioneer Modernism and the Tropics* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016).

26 Chandigarh is a widely studied topic. This list is merely a suggestion: Norma Evenson, *Chandigarh* (University of California Press, 1966); Ravi Kalia, "Chandigarh: A Planned City," *Habitat International* 9, no. 3 (1 January 1985): 135–50; Jaspreet Takhar, ed., *Celebrating Chandigarh* (Chandigarh: Grantha Corporation, 2002); Vikramaditya Prakash, *Chandigarh's Le Corbusier: The Struggle for Modernity in Postcolonial India* (University of Washington Press, 2002); Nihal Perera, "Contesting Visions: Hybridity, Liminality and Authorship of the Chandigarh Plan," *Planning Perspectives* 19, no. 2 (2004): 175–99.

27 Drew, "On the Chandigarh Scheme," *Marg*, October 1953; Idem., "Living: Sector 22," *Marg* (October 1961).

28 In Chandigarh, the governmental housing was designed according to the rank of the residents, ranging from Type 1 for higher employees, to Type 13 for the lowest.

29 Drew and Fry, "Planning and Development in Chandigarh, Chandigarh: Housing, Town and Country Planning Summer School," (London, 1963), F&D/4/1, Fry & Drew Papers, RIBA Archive; Drew, "Indigenous Architecture: Architecture in the Tropics," *Perspecta* 8 (1963): 57–58.

Peons' Village in Chandigarh and Watapuluwa Housing Scheme in Kandy

Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva attended these events and were likely deeply influenced by these debates. In fact, their social motivations towards the people were aligned with or even preceded the CIAM discussions. For example, Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry, while working as West Africa town planners for the British Empire during WWII, had already stood up for the interests of the local people, advising contrarily to the colonial power. Afterward, they pioneered participatory methodologies during the 1950s. In particular, in Tema Manhean, Ghana, they promoted discussions with the future users of the projects and even changed initial layouts. As methods of collecting feedback, they organized exhibitions and constructed housing prototypes that were tested, criticized, and eventually amended.[25] Also, Minnette De Silva started to develop the study entitled "Cost-Effective Housing Studies" (1954–1955) during her student years. Moreover, the social concerns chiefly present in her architectural line of thought have been present since the Karunaratne House project, initiated in 1948. Peons' Village (1956), Watapuluwa (1955–1958), and the participatory methodologies employed are the culmination of the architects' social concerns.

Peons' Village, Chandigarh

As senior architect of the Chandigarh project (1951–54), Drew worked alongside Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, and Maxwell Fry. As Chandigarh was conceived as a new city, planned from the ground up, the design responsibilities were distributed among the four architects and their team of Indian architects.[26] Le Corbusier designed the city's masterplan and a hierarchized road grid that framed rectangular sectors, later designed by the other architects. Jane Drew is credited for the layout of Sector 22, the inceptive neighbourhood.[27] In addition, she designed fourteen building types, covering education, recreation, commercial, health facilities, and government housing. Regarding Drew's social preoccupations, I am especially interested in the communities that she created in Sector 22, referred to as peons' villages (figure 2).

Arising from the will to recreate the rural environment from which the residents came, peons' villages are organized as groups of approximately two hundred dwellings of Housing Type 13.[28] The complexes are walled, accessible by arches that mark entry points to pedestrian streets, and arranged around a green public space (figure 3). Type 13 was designed to house the peons, or messengers, the lowest-income governmental employees. In its design, Drew took Chandigarh's climate into consideration but also the residents' traditions and habits. For example, besides two rooms, a cooking veranda, a water closet, and a bath compartment, the typology includes a generous rear courtyard to facilitate Indian outside living habits, such as sleeping outdoors during the hot and monsoon seasons (figure 4). Cooking habits were also accounted for.[29]

30 Drew and Fry, "Planning and Development in Chandigarh," 10.

The awareness of the referred local specificities was achieved by in situ observation, but most by direct consultation with the future users, taken as a working participatory methodology:

> We had many meetings with our future clients, who told us all about the intricacies of Hindoo religious observance in the domestic routine, the separation of sexes, castes and occupations, of customs of sleeping and relaxation brought about by the climate. They told us of the need for sleeping on the roof or in the garden at certain times of year.[30]
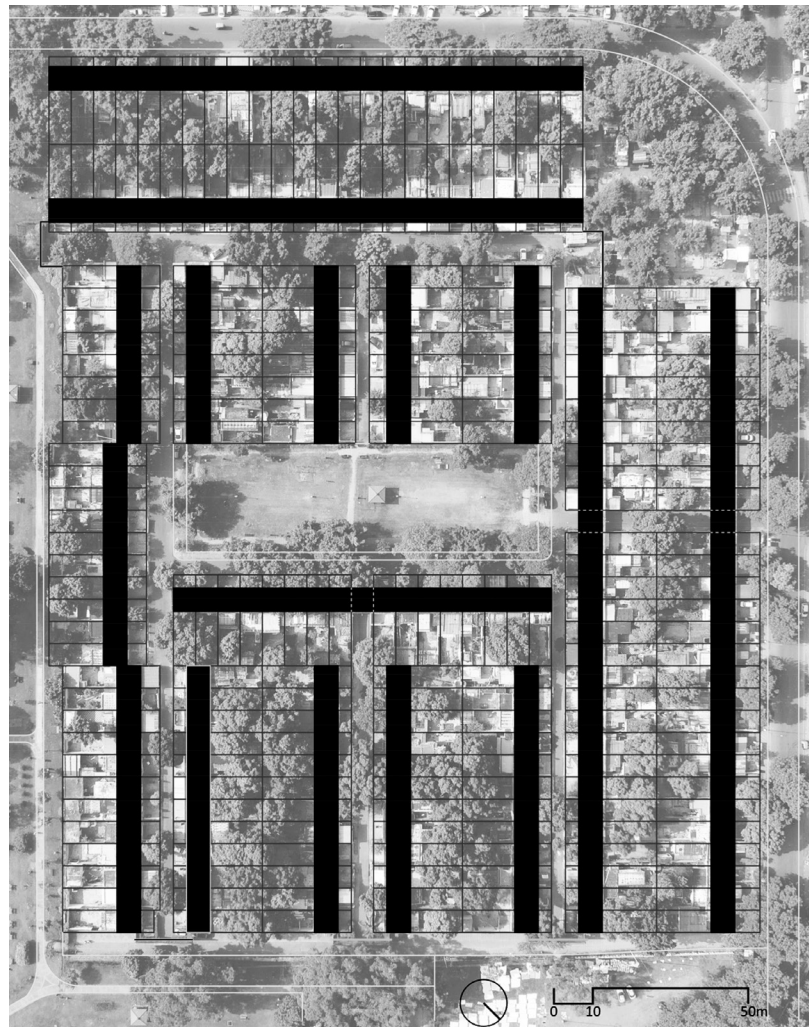

fig. 2 Plan of the Peons' Village by Jane Drew, Sector 22D, Chandigarh, India. Superimposition of Drew's masterplan with Google Maps. By author.

31 Fry, "Autobiography, India" (London, 1983), 42, F&D/4/2, Fry & Drew Papers, RIBA Archive.

32 Ibid., 40.

33 Drew, "Letter to Caroline," 1988, 8, F&D/21/1, Fry & Drew Papers, RIBA Archive.

34 Idem., "Reflections on My Life and Work" (London, 3 January 1993), 4–5, F&D/25/3, Fry & Drew Papers, RIBA Archive.

fig. 3 Peons' Village by Jane Drew, Sector 22D, Chandigarh, India. Photograph taken in 2022 by the author.

fig. 4 Peons' Village by Jane Drew, Sector 22D, Chandigarh, India. Photograph taken in 2022 by the author.

As mentioned, in a desire to work with all the involved parties in the project and actively include the collective input in the decision-making process, Jane Drew arranged extensive meetings, generating data to help in the projects. For instance, talking about the Sector 22 health centre, Fry recalled Drew "conferring with a young doctor [...] and designing with him."[31] Also, referring to the shopkeepers, Fry pointed out that "we designed with them [...] and so successful was the outcome that they willingly built for us with their own money covered ways connecting their colonnade with the booths for the still poorer stallholders."[32] In sum, Drew concluded: "I see that we have always practiced community architecture [...] we have consulted all those who were to use the buildings."[33]

Mock-ups were another methodology seeking public participative intervention, and enabled the fine-tuning of projects accordingly. For instance, regarding the lowest categories of housing, Drew held: "before large numbers were built, we built prototypes of each different house type which were then lived in, criticized, and improved. In this way we found that the Indians [...] were willing to try out new ways of living."[34]

Noteworthy is that the Chandigarh Project empowered a new chapter for housing design in India as the first city where every legal house had sewage, drinking water, and electricity. The effective engagement of several parties in the co-creation process was an innovative participative methodology with which Jane Drew prioritized the needs and aspirations of the residents, contributing to the success of the city. Nowadays, Peons' Village remains home to a diverse community of government employees.

fig. 5   Peons' Village by Jane Drew, Sector 22D, Chandigarh, India. Photograph taken in 2022 by the author.

35   De Silva, *The Life & Work of an Asian Woman Architect* (Colombo: Smart Media Productions, 1998), 207.
36   Ibid.

The liveliness and intimate scale of the compound, along with its public spaces, stand in stark contrast to the expansiveness found in other parts of the city. The preservation and maintenance of the houses are intricately tied to the residents. Their status as government employees leads to frequent changes in occupancy. Nonetheless, the majority of the houses are in satisfactory condition (figure 5).

Watapuluwa Housing Scheme, Kandy

Sri Lanka gained independence from the British Empire in 1948. During the post-colonial momentum, the country was challenged by housing shortages. In this momentum, a building society formed by a group of wives of public servants invited De Silva to develop an economic cooperative housing scheme in Watapuluwa, an area on the outskirts of Kandy. De Silva designed the masterplan of the scheme, encompassing two hundred and fifty houses—a novelty, for both the architect and the country (figure 6). De Silva described the project as such: "my problem was a challenging one — to house a varied group of individuals and families of differing incomes and backgrounds within the same development; and at the same time reducing costs to a minimum" (figure 7).[35]

Like Jane Drew, Minnette De Silva was equally determined to focus on the users: "I made every effort to cater for the individual."[36] As a methodology, both architects promoted extensive consultations with the future residents, though De Silva went a step further and collected information through questionnaires. The inquiries, intended to personalize the mass scheme, ranged from families' income capability, sociocultural

fig. 6 Watapuluwa housing scheme, Kandy,
        Sri Lanka. Superimposition of De Silva's
        masterplan with Google Maps.
        By the author.

fig. 7 Watapuluwa housing scheme, Kandy,
        Sri Lanka. Photograph taken in 2023 by
        the author.

37   Chanaka Talpahewa, "un-Habitat Sri Lanka | Towards 'Housing for All' through Peoples' Participatory Process," https://unhabitat.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/whd-paper-article-by-Chanaka-Talpahewa.pdf (2023–12–10).

38   De Silva, *The Life & Work,* 207.

status, car usage, spiritual beliefs, preferable materials, cooking methods, and children's requirements. An example of a questionnaire is presented in De Silva's autobiography. After its analysis, De Silva called group meetings, divided according to housing cost, to discuss detailed aspects.

The outcome was a set of several housing plan typologies that each family could adjust according to their preferences. Moreover, it seems unlikely that De Silva designed and supervised the construction of all the plots, which opens the door for a self-built component. Consequently, no two houses are alike (figure 8). Thanks to all the preceding aspects, Watapuluwa was addressed as a pioneering project where, "for the first time in Sri Lanka, and perhaps in the world, an inclusive beneficiary participatory process/ approach was adopted in housing."[37] De Silva also recognized the originality of the initiative: "This project is really an early example of 'community architecture.'"[38]

Nearly seven decades later, my recent fieldwork aimed to draw conclusions. Faced with the absence of archives or records, and relying solely on De Silva's elusive documentation found in her autobiography, the challenges are diverse, as it remains uncertain which houses were designed by De Silva. Through an examination of formal language, constructive details, and spatial grammar, I argue that certain houses

fig. 8   Watapuluwa Housing Scheme, Kandy, Sri Lanka. Aerial photograph taken in 2023. By author.

Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva Pioneering Participatory Architecture

fig. 9   House by Minnette De Silva, Watapuluwa
        housing scheme, Kandy, Sri Lanka.
        Photograph taken in 2023 by the author.

39   Ibid., 219.

definitely bear the architect's signature (figure 9). However, it is equally apparent that participants who selected De Silva's layouts have often extended and transformed them. The total area underwent gentrification, erasing almost all traces of the original participants. It is also clear that, as land prices rose, plots were subdivided, and many houses were or are being unhesitatingly demolished, regardless of their patrimonial value.

Conclusion

Peons' Village and Watapuluwa are illustrative of two successful housing schemes designed with the effective inclusion of future inhabitants. In the final comments on De Silva's biography, she emphasized how "people seemed very happy there […] a tremendous felicitous community spirit."[39] These aspects are precisely the ones that I felt the most during fieldwork, on my daily explorations of Drew's Peons' Village. In parallel, the attentiveness to climatic components, the seamless integration of local costumes and traditions into the housing design, the skilful management of a strict budget and available materials and manpower, as well as the sensitivity to comprehend and meet the future users' needs and aspirations, all played pivotal roles in the projects' accomplishment. These features, closely tied to the architects' individual design capabilities, deserve as much emphasis as their facilitation of the co-creation process.

Likewise, the methodologies and motivations driving Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva's creative processes should be situated within the evolving architectural framework of their era. Their practices were intricately woven into the emerging theoretical discourses being formed since the

40 Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (1 July 1969): 216–24.

41 Jennifer Mack, "Urban Design from Below: Immigration and the Spatial Practice of Urbanism," *Public Culture* 26 (19 December 2013): 153.

post-war period, claiming a more humane architecture. While Drew advocated for close engagement through consultations, probing into people's needs, habits, and cultural factors, promoting prototype construction to gather information to improve the designs, De Silva took a step further. After the groundbreaking use of questionnaires and more specific group meetings, she granted a level of design flexibility that allowed residents not only to plan but potentially even build their own houses. The distinctions between these two projects underscore that participation lacks a standardized procedure, an accepted version, or a one-size-fits-all methodology, as users and communities are never alike.

In line with this, it should also be acknowledged that the distinct approaches between Drew and De Silva are inherently tied to the scope of the projects. Despite having a similar number of plots, Drew was simultaneously assisting in the design of the entire city of Chandigarh. Moreover, unlike De Silva, who was engaging with her own people in her country, Drew navigated a social and cultural environment that differed from her own. Her willingness to improve the lives of the lower strata of Indian people by hearing, considering, and incorporating their opinions should be considered highly innovative.

In conclusion, both architects, with their distinct challenges and contexts, stand out for their groundbreaking efforts in their own right, especially considering that they occurred in the mid-1950s, a time when "human architecture" was just taking the first steps, and that participatory architecture only gained wide-ranging visibility in the 1960s. Aligning with the rungs of the "ladder of citizen participation," Drew and De Silva validated end-user inputs that influenced the built design.[40] Their commitment to "sensitive, piecemeal, and specifically participatory planning" diverged from the established "top-down" or "from above" approaches, seemingly reflecting the influence of the social sciences. [41]

Lastly, these projects demonstrate how a participatory process, serving as the driving force behind co-creation, redefined the architect's role in the design process, utterly dissonant with that of the modern architect. In the proximity of the user, the architect evolved beyond a creator of form, becoming a plural and holistic facilitator within co-creation. In Watapuluwa, this transformation was so profound that the question of authorship, so dear to architecture, became inconclusive, underscoring the unpredictable nature of participation. Above all, Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva championed community architecture as a platform for collective engagement with the people, and as a tool to contribute to a more humane architectural practice.

Rui del Pino Fernandes
University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE–IUL), Centre for Socioeconomic Change and Territorial Studies (DINÂMIA'CET)

João Cunha Borges
University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE–IUL), Centre for Socioeconomic Change and Territorial Studies (DINÂMIA'CET)

Teresa Marat-Mendes
University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE–IUL), Centre for Socioeconomic Change and Territorial Studies (DINÂMIA'CET)

Architecture from an Alternative Power

—

Participation and Design in the Catujal Workers Estate SAAL Operation

In a revolution, governors can no longer govern, and the governed refuse to be so. In this sense, the experience of the Portuguese Local Support Service (Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local—SAAL) epitomizes the national revolution of 1974–5, allowing poor city workers to reclaim the right to housing and the city. This essay discusses the Catujal Workers Estate, built in this context, in Loures (Lisbon Region) with a plan by the brigade led by architect Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral. Most information is derived from the reports and drawings of the original SAAL intervention, with the aim of presenting an observation of this case and trying to highlight the process of cooperation that linked those designing the habitat with those who were to live in it.

1 Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2005).

2 Tom Avermaete & Janina Gosseye, *Urban design in the 20th century: a history* (Zurich: GTA Verlag, 2022); João Cunha Borges & Teresa Marat-Mendes, "Viagem à capital de Lisboa," in *Políticas de Habitação em Lisboa*, ed. Gonçalo Antunes (Lisbon: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 2023).

3 Gonçalo Antunes, *Políticas de Habitação — 200 anos* (Odivelas: Caleidoscópio, 2018).

4 Antunes, *Políticas...*

5 Ricardo Agarez (ed), *Habitação — Cem anos de políticas públicas em Portugal* (Lisbon: Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana, 2018).

6 Antunes, *Políticas...*

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, housing design still poses challenges which strongly imply concepts of justice, democracy and social organization. Unplanned and deregulated urban development has been hailed for being adaptive, individualized, and diverse, but it can also easily become unruly, deprived, and unsafe.[1] Planned development, at its best, provides adequate infrastructure, facilities and organization, but can also become easily diagrammatic, defiant to change, or restrictive.[2] Thus, the challenge is to avoid both top-down development based on a priori conceptions *and* the sprawl of informal settlements which deepen social inequalities. What can be done to ensure that urban transformation is properly structured, but also open to the changing needs of communities? It is likely that most solutions are yet to be found through the channels linking government and governance, technical expertise and popular decision-making. Luckily, the past has left us important experiences and clues regarding the types of organization which favour achieving such endeavours.

In Portugal, the scenario seems at first less than inviting. Public housing policies were almost negligeable until the 1930s, and even then, they were created and enforced by a Bonapartist dictatorship, the New State (*Estado Novo*, 1933–1974), whose key housing policies were designed for the middle classes, guaranteeing access to the property through a twenty-five-year through a twenty-five-year instalment plan.[3] Only in 1959 was there a large, apparently more inclusive programme for public housing, yet for ten years this applied only to the city of Lisbon.[4]

In 1969, the creation of the Housing Development Fund (*Fundo Fomento à Habitação* — FFH) within the Public Works Ministry (*Ministério das Obras Públicas* — MOP), allowed the planning of similar programmes in the metropolitan regions and some inland towns.[5] But access to housing , even when promoted by the state, remained unaccountable to any specific community.[6] Indeed, even municipalities played a merely consultant role in the processes of urbanization, whose key actors were solely the MOP departments.

Thus, until 1974, there was no legislation for communities to demand a housing estate, let alone to play a part in its design. During the democratic era, starting in November 1975, public housing continued to be under the responsibility of state institutions — central and municipal — but was increasingly oriented towards the most vulnerable sectors of society, including the many remaining slum and shack dwellers who, even in the capital, persisted until the late 1990s. Little more than assistance operations, the resulting housing estates did give a proper roof to many families, but regardless of their efficiency, they did not reflect the aspirations of their communities, nor were they understood as emancipatory tools for promoting social mobility. Only more recently have programmes for participated design been introduced, but their scope remains limited and site-specific, and it does not apply equally to all social classes: in the poorer,

7   Raquel Varela, *A people's history of the Portuguese Revolution* (London: Pluto, 2019).

8   Teresa Barata Salgueiro, *Lisboa: periferia e centralidades* (Oeiras: Celta, 2001).

9   Varela, *Portuguese Revolution*.

10 José António Bandeirinha, *O Processo SAAL e a Arquitectura no 25 de Abril de 1974* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2011); Maria Rodrigues, *Pelo Direito à Cidade* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 1999).

sometimes informal, housing areas, public participation usually implies the process of creating modest, if not negligeable, urban improvements or basic equipment, but their status and more general problems usually remain unchanged. Because, all things considered, participation is not synonymous with justice, even though it is a fundamental aspect of it.

In this context, the years 1974–75, marked by the Portuguese Ongoing Revolutionary Process (*Processo Revolucionário em Curso* — PREC), kickstarted in April 25, 1974 with the Carnation Revolution, emerge as a time of exception. Participation and justice became paramount not just for technicians and politicians, but also for the common people, who gathered on workers commissions or residents' associations to take on the challenges of their daily lives, their labour conditions and their aspirations, actively establishing an alternative power to the state, characteristic of a revolutionary situation.[7]

In late 1975, through a constitutional process involving the agreement of the main political forces, state power recovered and the (social) revolution was defeated. But its short life was intensely marked by housing problems—and solutions—since Portuguese cities and their peripheries had endured a decades-long housing crisis.[8] Hence there was a sprawl of speculative housing estates and of illegal neighbourhoods mostly inhabited by the poor, comprising all sorts of building types with variable degrees of construction quality, with public housing offering but a pale alternative.

Revolution happens when those who govern can no longer do so, and those who are governed can no longer be governed in the same way.[9] In this sense, the experience of the Local Support Service (*Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local* — SAAL), a state programme launched during the PREC, was a deeply revolutionary experience. The poor workers of the main urban regions no longer accepted that political power would condemn them to live in jerry-built houses and deprived shacks while the affluent lived in neighbourhoods with proper construction, proper infrastructure, conditions for a public life, and access to transportation: they demanded not only the right to housing, but also the right to inhabit the city.[10] The SAAL seems to embody the PREC in many ways, both being short-lived but both leaving a ballast of hopes and inspirations (or of dread and disgust, depending on ideological leanings) that largely outlived them, and that seems to always suggest pathways out of the harsh conditions of contemporary life in our gentrified cities.

Here, we discuss the process of a housing estate with roots in the SAAL, the Workers' Estate (*Bairro dos Trabalhadores*) in the municipality of Loures, in the immediate periphery of Lisbon. Located in the civil parish of Apelação, its residents were former slum dwellers from the contiguous area of Catujal, so the estate slipped into posterity as the Catujal Workers Estate. Although the FFH had intended to draw up a plan for the area since 1972, its construction only started when the SAAL took over the plan.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

11   Bandeirinha, *Processo SAAL*.

12   Delfim Sardo, ed., *The SAAL Process: Architecture and Participation 1974–1976* (Porto: Museu de Serralves, 2014).

13   Rodrigues, *Direito à Cidade*.

14   Exhibition "Habitação: O SAAL em Loures," Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade de Lisboa and Câmara Municipal de Loures, Palácio dos Marqueses da Praia e Monforte, Loures, 2015.

15   Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório da Equipa do Catujal* [Report of the Catujal team], 15–11–1974, Processo 23343/OM, Arquivo Municipal de Loures.

16   Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório do mês de Novembro de 1974* [Report of November 1974], 12–12–1974, Processo 23343/OM, Arquivo Municipal de Loures.

17   Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Documento para o Seminário de Maio, no Porto*, [Document for the May Seminar in Porto], 31–12–1975, Processo 23343/OM, Arquivo Municipal de Loures; José Sarmento, interview by the authors, 06–02–2023.

18   Sarmento, interview by the authors.

More interestingly, when the SAAL collapsed in 1976, the residents' association continued construction in accordance with the SAAL plan.

The first section of the essay contextualizes the Catujal area and its situation at the time the SAAL commenced. Section 2 introduces the SAAL and presents the plan developed for the Workers Estate by the brigade led by architect Francisco Pires (aka Pitum) Keil do Amaral (b. 1935). Section 3 focuses on the dissolution of the SAAL programme and introduces the second phase of construction. Section 4 discusses the design and programming aspects of the plan through a comparison with the current state of the neighbourhood.

Bandeirinha published an outstanding work presenting a vast overview of the SAAL programme, while providing a minute survey of all the projects, regardless of their construction status.[11] This is further illustrated in the exhibition *The SAAL Process: Architecture and Participation 1974–1976*.[12] While focusing on the case of Porto, the study by Rodrigues critiques the SAAL as a planning and housing policy and evaluates the fundamental role of residents' associations.[13] For Catujal, the available literature is relatively scant, but we have reconstituted its urban process through the comparison of different military ordnance surveys and aerial photographs, as well as the panels from the exhibition on the SAAL operations of Loures.[14] The main source of information regarding the plans was the documentation, both written and drawn, made available by the Loures Municipal Archive, namely the full SAAL process, including the monthly reports issued by the brigade. An informal interview was conducted with the former president of the Neighbourhood Workers Association. Finally, in loco visitations and photographic surveys provided the direct observation which also informs the discussion.

More than presenting an in-depth observation of a SAAL operation, we aim to understand how the design activities of SAAL were coordinated with a local (and vulnerable) community in the creation of a habitat.

1   Upwards to Catujal

Catujal was part of a harsh valley system with ridges and steep hills where, by the 1970s, houses were being built indiscriminately in more or less regular gridirons (figure 1). Its unpaved streets, under the winter rains, became a quagmire where it was nearly impossible to walk.[15] After sundown, houses became engulfed in thick darkness.[16] The residents, nearly all industrial workers and construction employees, went down the hill to catch a bus on the military road to reach the nearby towns, and from there took other transport to their workplaces, sometimes very far away.[17] Children went to schools in nearby villages, usually at Apelação and had to endure long walks through dirt pathways.[18]

It had been over a decade since the spree of illegal construction had started to claw at the olive groves and farmland of the areas surrounding Lisbon, as it did in other areas of Loures and the Amadora area of Oeiras.
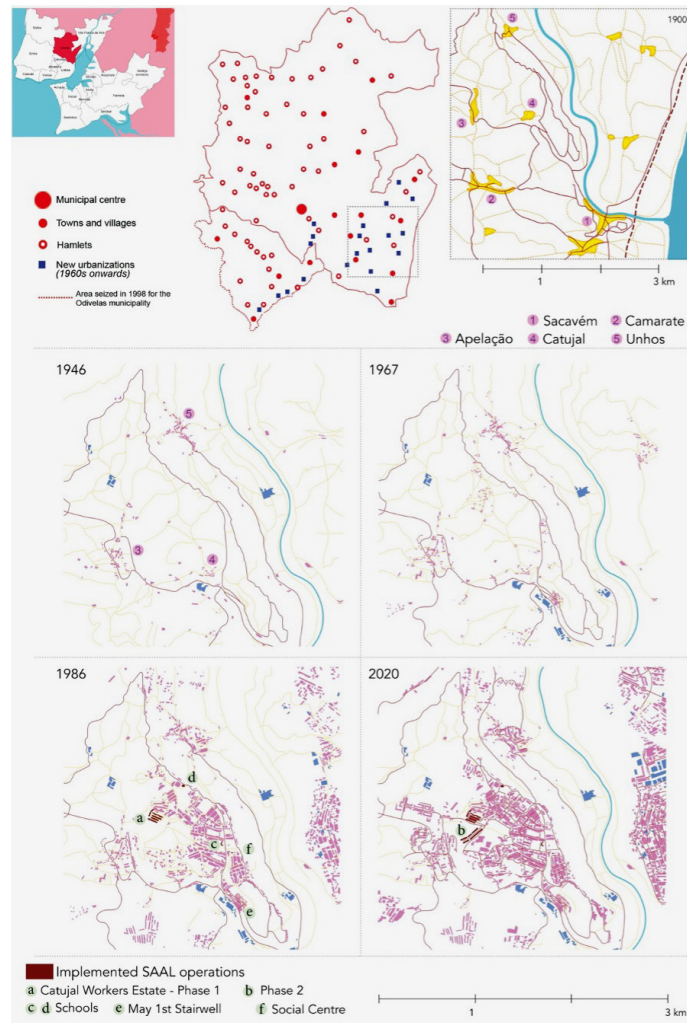
fig. 1 Urban evolution of Catujal, Unhos and Apelação

19 António Freitas, "Bairros clandestinos," *Arquitectura*, no. 73 (December 1961): 27–35.
20 Ibid.

Most were improvised by speculative landowners within the limits of farmsteads, sold plot by plot, often to a second level of speculators who would build houses (and to a lesser extent workshops and industrial units) to sell or rent for profit.[19] Thus, in many (though not all) cases, the tenants of these houses had but little say in the actual making of the neighbourhood, which resulted from the accumulation of ventures that, albeit relatively petty, proved lucrative.[20] Some were denser, others sparser; some were more structured, others chaotic; some stood on gentle hills, others on ridges — the only rules were those of financial interest and construction possibilities, sometimes taken to the limit. The New State, having created

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

21 Ibid.
22 Teresa Valsassina Heitor & Jorge Gonçalves, "Êxodos e migrações na Região de Lisboa," *Prumo* nº 6 (December 2019); Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório sobre os estragos causados pelos temporais de 25/26 de Novembro de 1967* [Report on the damages of the storms of 25–26 November 1967], 18–12–1967, Processo 13779, Arquivo Municipal de Loures.

fig. 2 The neighbourhoods of Manteigas and Nossa Senhora da Saúde, Catujal, 2023.

an urban planning policy, ostensibly ignored this vast phenomenon which, obviously, clashed with the urban plans resulting from the state's own departments. In 1960, a Lisbon newspaper (*Diário de Lisboa*) had hypocritically hailed the clandestine development of "José Bernardino Delgado and associates" in the fifty-four hectares of the Brandoa farmstead (in today's Amadora) as a new civil parish built "for all pockets."[21]

This prompted some interest in the subject, and architect António Pinto de Freitas (1925–2014), one of the authors of the massive public housing plan of Olivais Sul in Lisbon, wrote a colourful but wise article on clandestine development in 1961. Although Freitas mostly focused on the areas of Brandoa and Prior Velho, the illustrations include other examples, including those of the eerily dense Manteigas neighbourhood (figure 2), the most emblematic clandestine area — nearly a slum — of Catujal. This, however, was only one of eight clandestine developments that had sprawled around and between Unhos, Apelação and Catujal: Vinha da Coroa, Martin do Vale, Miradouro, Queimadas, Manteigas, Nossa Senhora da Saúde and Wenceslau.

Urbanization plans had been created for Bobadela (1969), São João da Talha (1971) and Prior Velho (1971), privileged locations for clandestine development, planning efforts possibly prompted by the tragic floods around Lisbon of November 1967 and the collapse of a six-floor building in Brandoa in 1969.[22] For Catujal, Unhos and Apelação, the first efforts seem to have advanced in 1972, but until the PREC, the majority of development remained clandestine, aside from a few apartment buildings which obtained approval from the municipality, especially in Apelação.

Architecture from an Alternative Power

23 *Programa de Acções Prioritárias a considerar pelos serviços do FFH*, 02–07–1974 [Programme of priority actions to consider in the FFH services], quoted in Rodrigues, *Direito à Cidade.*

24 Bandeirinha, *Processo SAAL.*

25 Bandeirinha, *Processo SAAL.;* Rodrigues, *Direito à Cidade.*

26 Rodrigues, *Direito à Cidade.;* Carlos Nunes Silva, *Política urbana em Lisboa, 1926–1974* (Lisbon: Horizonte, 1994).

27 Rodrigues, *Direito à Cidade.*

28 Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório do mês de Abril de 1975* [Report of April 1975], 06–05–1975, Processo 23343/OM, Arquivo Municipal de Loures, 3–4.

29 Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório do mês de Novembro de 1974* [Report of November 1974], 5.

But by this time, it would already be strange to recall that Catujal was a very small hamlet—a seventeenth-century chapel, and a handful of small and very small houses—on an isolated plateau midway between the hamlets, themselves small, of Unhos and Apelação. Houses were being built in the unbuilt spaces in these hamlets, and whole rural estates were being urbanized, in some cases with an intricate and vertiginous system of narrow passages and stairwells. In many cases, houses were improperly built and lacked basic conditions.

2 The Revolution and the Catujal Workers Estate

The SAAL can be seen as an adherence of architects to the revolution. The intervention of the FFH was recalibrated according to four priority stages defined by housing deficit, demand and supply.[23] But for the first time, the services prioritized the housing needs of the poorer sectors of the population and degraded urban areas, making the SAAL perhaps the most radical shift on housing policies in modern Portuguese history.[24] It implied a conceptual change—the right to housing was associated with the right to the city, since people often struggled to build a new habitat in the same place, instead of being displaced—but also a political change, envisioning new links between state services and the population, and a change in urban management, with new instruments for planning and financing made available.[25] However, upon the official publication of the SAAL as a legal decree, some ambiguities started to arise. First, the municipal councils were brought into the process, but without considering the bureaucratic proceedings of these institutions and their lack of a tradition in direct urban intervention.[26] Furthermore, the mechanisms made available for both land expropriation and for housing financing proved to be contradictory or highly exposed to bureaucratic blockade.[27]

Even in the context of the SAAL, Catujal introduced a particular ambition: it sought to encompass "simultaneously the creation of a new housing estate but also to refurbish or restructure the existing vast clandestine zone."[28] Consequently, this implied making design and technical assistance available to the impoverished community of seven thousand people who were already settled on the hills between Catujal, Apelação and Unhos and their intermediate blanket of illegal neighbourhoods.[29]

The SAAL brigade was assembled in early November 1974, led by architect Pitum Keil do Amaral, and included two architecture majors, Margarida Valla (b. 1951) and Tomás Fonseca (b. ?), later replaced by José Manuel Fernandes (b. 1953), law student João Mascarenhas (1945–2016) and sociologist Isabel Fonseca (b. ?). Their gathering place was a small dairy located in the nearby neighbourhood of Queimadas, while the Unhos Civil Parish functioned as an information centre. In less than a month, a first meeting with residents was set. Many demands were made: roads, garbage collection, toponomy, electricity transformation substation, a school, street

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 3.
32 Ibid.
33 Sarmento, interview by the authors.
34 Diário do Governo, 03–05–1975 — Despacho da Secretaria de Estado da Habitação e Urbanismo, 2707.
35 Sarmento, interview by the authors.
36 Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório do mês de Janeiro de 1976* [Report of January 1976], 21–01–1976, Processo 23343/om, Arquivo Municipal de Loures.

lighting and three fountains.[30] Houses and families abounded in number, but essential infrastructures and building quality were lacking.

Directly considered as a test to understand the proper relations between the community, the brigade and the state institutions (municipality and FFH), a public stairwell was designed for the Manteigas and Nossa Senhora da Saúde neighbourhoods, to be built by some of the residents. It is painful to imagine going up that vertiginous hill, in the tight space between the buildings, without at least a stable stairwell. But such was the situation, and the nearly improvised project resulting from this first meeting sealed the intention of the brigade to study solutions to the pre-existing settlements, retroactively bringing amenities where these barely existed and little space remained to accommodate them.[31]

To accompany projects, meet the residents and take part in activities, much of the brigade's work was done during weekends and weekday evenings, as during the day people were at work. The urban plan was not, however, the only promoted in Catujal. A didactic play by the Applied Magnetics Workers Theatre, conferences on housing, health and sports as well as an anti-colonial exhibition with films and debates, and literacy courses for adults, all took place or started during the early days of the formation of residents' groups.[32]

From the very beginning, surveys were promoted with the living community, regarding their current housing situation but also their aspirations and needs. These surveys became a cornerstone of the project's future success, allowing the design brigade to understand in very specific terms what kind of house the residents would like, considering their family conditions, which dictated house divisions and the backyards for cultivation, a practice most residents brought from their countryside backgrounds.[33] Although the population took some time to trust the SAAL brigade and the FFH was relatively lax in providing support, efforts quickly seemed to achieve good results, and the Urbanization Plan for the Apelação Extension (figure 3), containing the SAAL operation, was approved.[34]

In May, residents' commissions were already constituted and had statutes, and by the next month, the association named "Catujal Workers Estate" was formalized, with headquarters in the dairy the SAAL brigade worked from. The organization of the local communities in residents' commissions was helped by the brigade, notably by Pitum, who lived in Apelação, but also by young political activists from left-wing parties who wanted to bring their neighbours to revolutionary activities, thus providing them with a political and civic education.[35]

It took some months for the approved plan to find implementation, but in early 1976, the Loures Council was already expropriating some of the land necessary for the construction, and agronomist Nuno Lecoq (b. ?) was contacted to provide guidelines for the outside areas.[36] In March, a large assembly was summoned to discuss the ongoing works, and a list of cooperative construction companies was compiled, showing a tacit

fig. 3   Pitum Keil do Amaral (coord) — Urbanization
            Plan for the Apelação Expansion, Loures,
            1975 (Processo 20490/OM, Arquivo Municipal
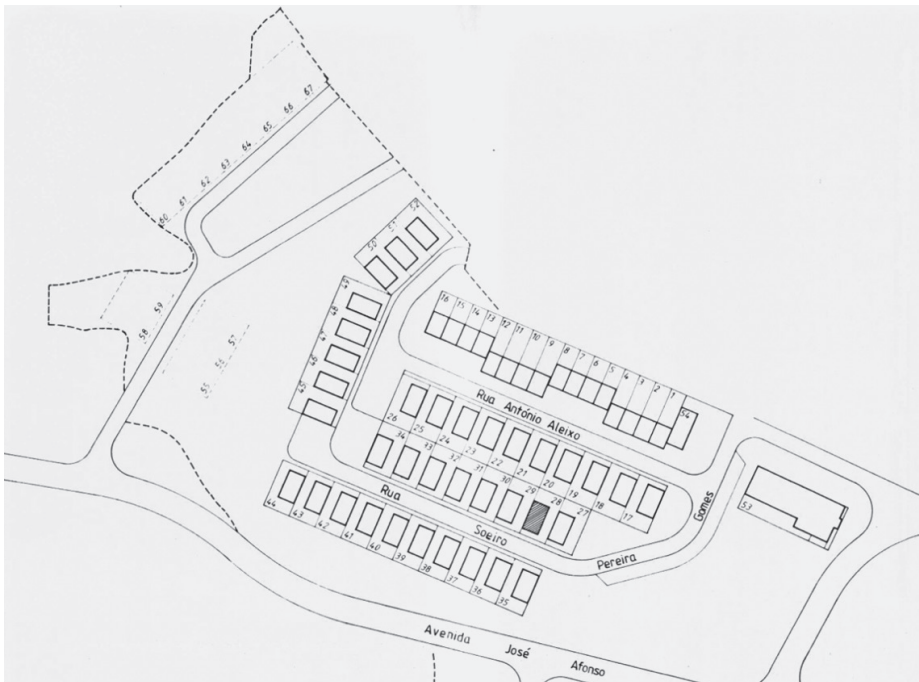   de Loures).

fig. 4   Catujal Workers Estate (Phase 1) General Plan,
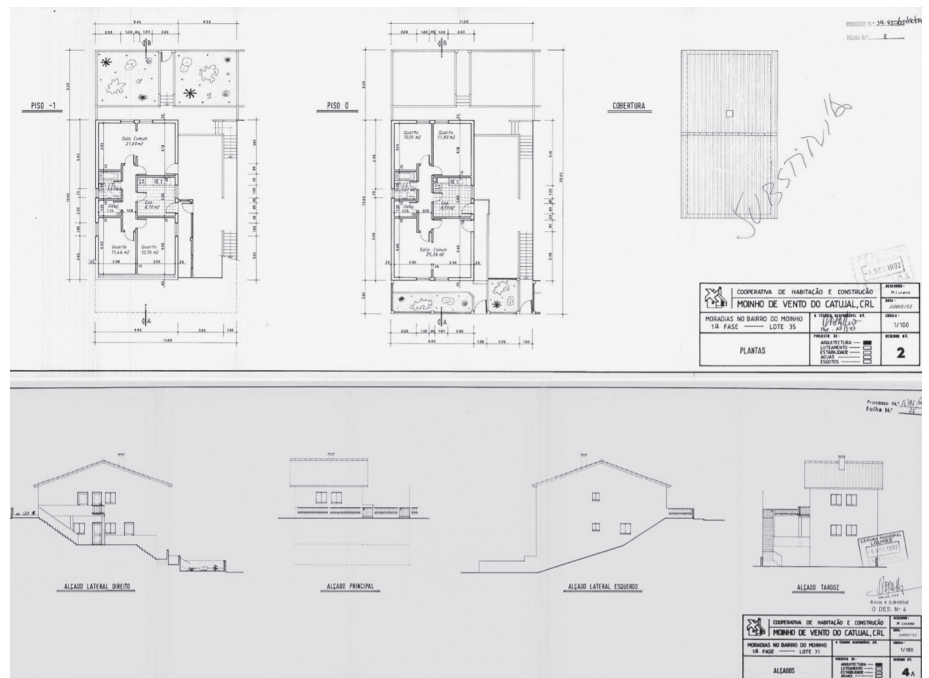Loures, 1975 (Processo 19439/OCP, Arquivo
Municipal de Loures).

fig. 5   Catujal Workers Estate (Phase 1) T2 F. Housing
Typology, Loures, 1975 (Processo 14789/OCP,
Arquivo Municipal de Loures)

37 Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório do mês de Março de 1976* [Report of March 1976], 20–03–1976, Processo 23343/OM, Arquivo Municipal de Loures.

38 Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório do mês de Julho de 1976* [Report of July 1976], 23–07–1976, Processo 23343/OM, Arquivo Municipal de Loures.

refusal of capitalist business.[37] After some delays due to budget adjustment, Uniurba, a construction cooperative, was hired.[38]

Similar to most SAAL interventions — but significantly, the opposite of what would become the norm in the Lisbon city — the project proposed a set of terraced and semi-detached houses with backyards (figure 4). While the architecture is simple and contained, it gains an expressive quality through its clever interplay with the topographical conditions, taking advantage of the gentle slope over which most of the houses are placed, and which allows the inception of typological variations without morphological interference (figure 5). Thus, units with a very similar design accommodated single-family houses and two separate houses stacked together. Lacking in any particular form of decorative whim — which has often been added to later by residents' alterations to the façades, gardens and roofs — the design of the houses retrieves the straightforward and clear-cut aesthetics of many cottage housing estates — including those promoted by the state — that usually were only built for the middle classes (figure 6).

The design of the building types also provided the basis for that of the proposed equipment: the commercial units (which were never built), the association headquarters, the social centre, and the schools, built in places that were strategically linked with pre-existing neighbourhoods.

fig. 6   Catujal Workers Estate, Phase 1, 2023.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

39 Varela, *Portuguese Revolution*.

40 Rodrigues, *Direito à Cidade*.

41 Bandeirinha, *Processo SAAL*.; Rodrigues, *Direito à Cidade*.

42 Processo 3513/OCP, Arquivo Municipal de Loures.

3 The Collapse of the SAAL and the Cooperative Epilogue

In late 1975, with the government on strike, military coups and the isolation of the most radical members of the armed forces — who were backing the alternative power held by workers and residents' associations — the revolution was defeated. From here on out, private property would no longer be questioned and cyclical elections replaced direct democracy with a representative one.[39] The state re-emerged as the decision maker. The Sixth Provisional Government (1975–76) created the Ministry for Housing, Urbanism and Construction, integrated by former members of the Civil Construction Industrials Guild, which may explain the shift in urban and housing policies.[40] The effects on the SAAL were naturally nefarious. Limitations started with a shift towards the forms of construction without residents' associations, and later financing was cut, prompting the resignation of the SAAL national director, José Paz Branco (1917–1997).

It is known that access to bank loans and to financing schemes in general was key to undercutting the intentions of SAAL brigades and residents' associations.[41] However, Catujal emerged as an exception. Indeed, the financial management of the whole process was efficient and rigorous, ensuring that the construction of the estate would continue even after the collapse of the SAAL. With this shift, it became a possibility that the residents of the new houses would do away with the SAAL project, but this did not happen. After the dissolution of the SAAL, the residents formed a cooperative, named Moinho de Vento do Catujal (Catujal Windmill), which again marks an "appropriation" by Catujal residents to the toponomy of land parcels actually belonging to Apelação. The cooperative built the second phase of the estate (figure 7) and ensured the legalization of all the houses in the late 1980s.[42] In accordance with the SAAL plan, street pavements, lighting and naming were advances, but most of the facilities were forgotten.

Located on the hill facing the first phase, the new housing employs different typologies (figure 8) although there is a clear effort — similar to the first phase — to integrate the different units in regular long slabs. Taking heed of the slope where they are built, the slabs present very dry and simple front façades opening onto the street, and more elaborate and vertical back façades facing a backyard. The basic morphology of this second phase, in long rows (figure 9), presents a deviation from the detached or semi-detached buildings which dominate clandestine developments and were also replicated in the first phase of the Workers Estate.

The whole branch links the first phase — crowned by a public plaza with a sports area — to the old Apelação Windmill, which has recently been restored and turned into an interpretative centre. Over time, a school was built, bringing yet another link between the Workers Estate and the remainder of the Catujal area.

fig. 8   Catujal Workers Estate (Phase 2) General Plan,
         Loures, 1975 (Processo 3513/OCP, Arquivo
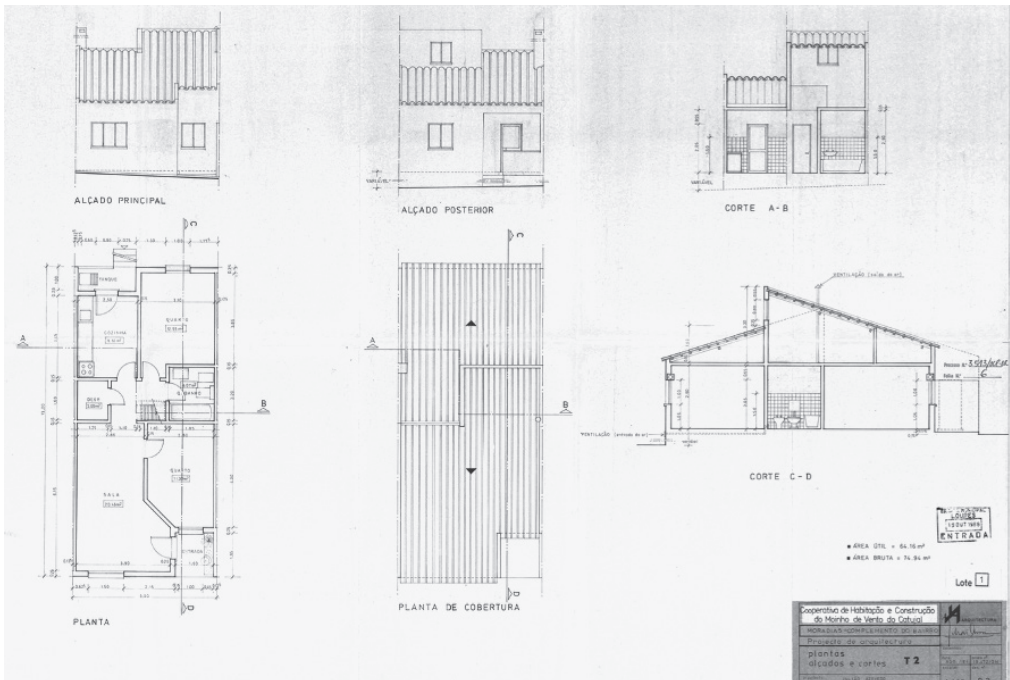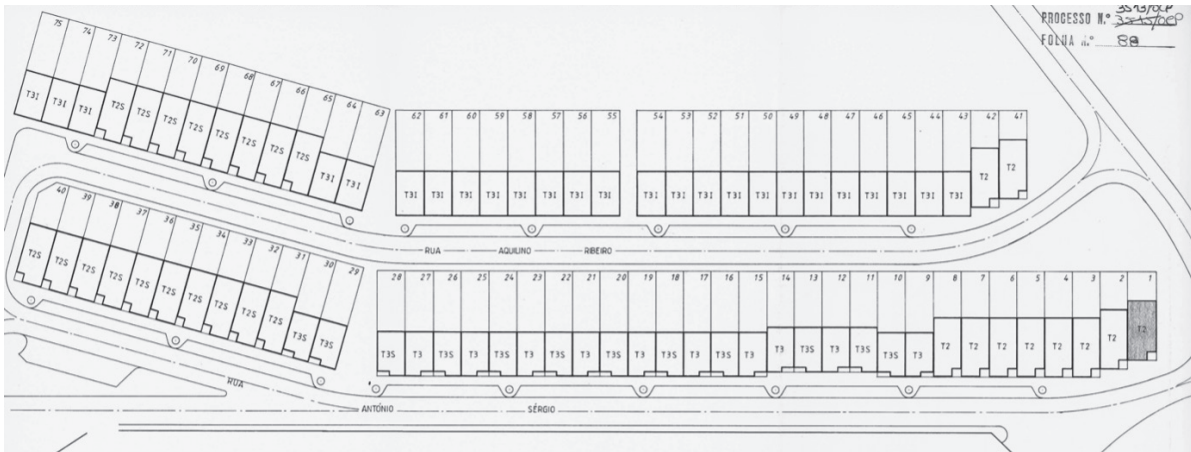   Municipal de Loures).

fig. 9   Phase 2 of the Catujal Workers Estate, 2023.

43   Varela, *Portuguese Revolution*.
44   *Relatório — Novembro 1974.*
45   Bandeirinha, *Processo SAAL*.; Rodrigues, *Direito à Cidade*.; Borges & Marat-Mendes, Viagem à capital de Lisboa.

4   Discussion

The reports on the SAAL operation in Catujal, today deposited in the Loures Municipal Archive, record an experience of revolutionary fervour, of enthusiasm and deep belief in the ability of people to take their lives into their own hands. They testify to a social and architectural experiment where common working people organized and decided about one of the most basic aspects of their existence: their habitat.

It has been hypothesized that the SAAL prompted the state to quench residents' commissions.[43] In Catujal, this does not apply, as the SAAL brigade seems to have acted in accordance with the residents and to understand its role to be formalizing — in the sense of giving spatial form to — the demands resulting from democratic decision-making. The whole process was deeply imbued by the banality of everyday concerns, but these were given an unprecedented legitimacy over both bureaucratic resistance and capitalist interests. The population revendicated the right to a house and a school, to transportations and paved roads, but also despaired over delays in obtaining land for a garden and resented opportunistic landlords who sought to influence decisions for personal gain.[44] Historical relevance here lies in bizarrely ordinary problems: the everyday life and the process of historical transformation are merged.

It is true that as a planning policy, SAAL benefited from over ten years of discussions and debates in architectural publications and congresses.[45] Those debates were often rooted in the extensive practical experience and research endeavours of some of the architects involved in the SAAL, namely those who had worked for the Lisbon Technical Office

46   Bandeirinha, *Processo SAAL*.; Antunes, *Políticas.*; Borges & Marat-Mendes, Viagem à capital de Lisboa.

47   Nuno Grande, ed., *The urban being: on the trails of Nuno Portas* (Lisbon: INCM/Casa da Moeda, 2012).

48   Bandeirinha, *Processo SAAL*.; Francisco Silva Dias & Nuno Portas, "Arquitectura Evolutiva," *Arquitectura*, no. 126 (October 1972): 100–121.

49   Bandeirinha, *Processo SAAL*.; José António Bandeirinha, Tiago Castela, Rui Aristides, Joana Gouveia Alves, "O Fundo de Fomento da Habitação de 1969 a 1982 Ordenamento, alternativas e mercado," in *Habitação – Cem anos de políticas públicas em Portugal*, ed. Ricardo Agarez, (Lisbon: Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana, 2018), 235–80.

for Housing (*Gabinete Técnico da Habitação* — GTH) on Olivais Norte, Olivais Sul and Chelas; or on studies and surveys conducted at the Housing and Construction Department of the National Laboratory of Civil Engineering (*Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia Civil* — LNEC).[46] This can be witnessed in one of its key proponents, Nuno Portas (b. 1934), who worked in the GTH and the LNEC, published several books and had an important role in disseminating international theories and projects in the architectural press. He also collaborated in the studio of Nuno Teotónio Pereira (1922–2016) including in projects for state-sponsored housing.[47] Despite the undeniable importance of these precedents, there is also much about the SAAL that is in fact new, at least in the Portuguese context. Despite its modest scale — one of the cornerstones of its detraction by the First Constitutional Government (1976–78) — it provided architects with opportunities to experiment with forms of single-family or low-density housing, often attempting to create housing that could evolve as familiar needs demanded it or that would be suitable for low-intensity construction, sometimes self-construction.[48]

The Catujal Workers Estate was a typical SAAL intervention for Loures, although the work effectively carried on here was more sporadic than, for instance, its neighbouring Camarate, which prompted three small SAAL projects (Torre, Santo António, Angola) and another for refugees of the colonial liberation (*Comissão de Apoio a Refugiados* — CAR).[49] However, this was not due to the brigade or the residents' commissions being oblivious to the more general problems. It can thus be argued that, if the alternative power they constituted had not been drained politically and financially, it would have been possible, in principle, to establish a new pattern for urbanization. The complete plan indeed repurposed the preferred housing type to a coherent and balanced habitat form including facilities, services, and public spaces necessary for both the quality of life of residents and the proper occupation of the available land.

As things turned out, the SAAL new estate ended up being a small exception in local urbanization, and soon land ownership resumed its role as its main driver.

In contrast with the eclecticism of the clandestine neighbourhoods where, over time, roads and facilities — relatively limited — were added, in the Catujal Workers Estate, the regularity of the façades and the nearly continuous strips of small gardens that guard the entrances to the houses immediately communicate a sense of unity and of amenity, a contained but dignified system for the relation of each house with its neighbours and of all to the street (figure 10). Architecturally, the Catujal Workers Estate bears a resemblance to the severe architecture of the working-classes, including the traditional villas and patios, and even in the assistance neighbourhoods of philanthropic promoters or the state. However, all of this is rendered in generous spaces, with minute transitional areas separating the main entrances from the façades, with back gardens or yards, with small but delicate public spaces, walkable streets and a picturesque relation

fig. 10   Street view of the Catujal Workers Estate,
Phase 1, 2023.

50   Teresa Marat-Mendes, Sara Silva Lopes, João
     Cunha Borges & Patrícia Bento d'Almeida, *Atlas
     of the food system — Challenges for a sustainable
     transition of the Lisbon Region* (Bern: Springer,
     2021).
51   Sarmento, interview by the authors.
52   Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório do mês
     de Maio de 1975* [Report of May 1975]; Sarmento,
     interview by the authors.
53   Rodrigues, *Direito à Cidade*.
54   Bandeirinha, *Processo SAAL*.; Rodrigues, *Direito
     à Cidade*.

with the topography, making use of the hill shapes and the limited pre-existing rural elements (notably the windmill) as punctuating moments. Importantly, another influence of the scheme, including the delicate profile of its roofs, can be found in some of the compact rural settlements whose morphology had been captured a decade earlier in the "Survey on Portuguese Regional Architecture" (1959–61).[50]

Considering the care clearly put by the residents into both the houses and the neighbourhood, and considering that most, if not all, were happy with and even proud of their homes, the Catujal Workers Estate must be considered a successful example of a SAAL intervention.[51] Although the population seems to have not been directly involved with architectural design, they approved the proposed solutions, and these were rooted in previous, highly specific surveys conducted by the architects with the residents, discussing their aspirations and needs.[52]

After its haphazard collapse, SAAL was considered to have been a failed experiment, an argument often based on the negative campaign promoted to justify its elimination.[53] Furthermore, many other problems stifled SAAL operations, namely the slow, complex processes for expropriating land and obtaining the necessary financing, the indefinite scope of action of the local brigades and the inertia or even active blockade from the municipalities.[54] In the case of Catujal, land expropriation was slow to take off, and was made harder by new shacks and clandestine homes sprouting on land included in the plan. The obtained financing seems to have been quite rational, and it covered continuing construction after SAAL ended. The brigade seems to have had great relations with the

55 Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório do mês de Novembro de 1974* [Report of November 1974].

56 Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral, *Relatório do mês de Janeiro de 1976* [Report of January 1976].

residents' association, and a positive collaboration was established from the start. The Loures municipality posed no obstacle to the works, and indeed acknowledged they were necessary to counteract clandestine development. However, important bureaucratic boycotting emerged from other state institutions, namely the National Aviation Authority (*Autoridade Nacional da Aviação Civil*) who claimed part of the land as a crash zone with precluded construction ability.[55] For a long time, the Ministry of Education also posed serious resistance, resisting the instalment of a school in Catujal.[56] But between the main actors of the intervention — population, brigade and municipality — there was a relationship of collaboration.

The difference between the estates resulting from the SAAL plan and the clandestine areas is self-evident, but it is curious to note that there was no fundamental deviation from the clearly established prevalence of single-family homes or small apartment buildings, to which one cannot find many exceptions, even today. In a sense, there was no attempt to introduce a shift in the urbanization pattern, but rather to present an improved version of the same basic morphology, suggesting that architects interpreted the aspirations of the residents in two ways: one direct, by interviewing the specific future residents, and another indirect, by observing (and critically interpreting) the houses of the already settled population. Thus, the methodology set by the SAAL operation, which straightforwardly refused to deal with landowners or profit venturers but only with the residents' commissions, proved to be effective, and reached its goal. Moreover, the level of satisfaction has proven to be an important factor in the good preservation of the original architecture: aside from colour adaptations and the construction of supporting sheds in the yards, the architecture has proven notably resilient.

On the other hand, the intention expressed in 1975 to extend the intervention to the rest of the area of Apelação, Catujal and Unhos was abandoned. The SAAL brigade sought to improve the existing settlements — and even achieved this in some instances — but this did not imply necessarily that this was a process of retroactively improving a grassroots or community-based urbanization. Indeed, in many cases, the construction of clandestine houses had nothing to do with the resident community, but rather with the speculators — owners and constructors — who desired to make profit.

SAAL shows a group of architects who understand themselves to be at the service of the population, and not of a state or municipal institution, an experience that would seldom be repeated in the future, even for architects who found themselves working on projects for social housing. It may be said that part of the enthusiasm that seems to pervade the reports from the SAAL in Catujal can be attributed to revolutionary fervour, but its origin may also have lain in the simple fact that, for the first time, decisions were being based on the direct intervention of those who would live with them afterwards.

Regardless of its origin, this fervour, which has generated a sometimes romantic view of the SAAL, can be said to be its greatest inheritance: taking the discussion around habitat out of the intellectual circuits of the press, and into the actual streets that were taking shape. Indeed, this was the first and only time in Portuguese modernity that urbanization was — for better or for worse — decided from below, from the organized working classes, and that alone makes it worthy of close attention, especially when it was successful.

Architecture from an Alternative Power

Nabil Zacharias Ben Chaabane
SLA Copenhagen, University
of Copenhagen

Nicolas Rodemann Lehmann
SLA Copenhagen,
Roskilde University

Nanna Maj Østergaard
SLA Copenhagen, University
of Copenhagen

Cecilie Jessen Hansen
SLA Copenhagen, University
of Copenhagen

Practice What You Preach!

—

Account of Urban Design from the Perspective of the Practitioner

Contemporary urban planning is a highly complex process, often spanning many years and involving many different types of stakeholders. Western countries and cities are increasingly conducting construction and involvement processes along the same lines. However, there continue to be significant cultural and geographical differences in how designers, planners, developers, and citizens understand those concepts. This paper aims to give a practitioner's perspective on how the design and planning process works in a Danish context. It does so by contextualizing Danish planning and elaborating on the tricky choices faced by designers and planners, elaborating on the specific philosophy of SLA.

It then finishes by going through some of the projects that SLA designed to give the reader an understanding of the involvement process, design, and learnings.

1   Carola van Eijk and Mila Gasco, "Unravelling the Co-Producers: Who are They and What Motivations Do They Have?" in *Co-Production and Co-Creation: Engaging Citizens in Public Services*, ed. Taco Brandsen et al. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 63–76; Elke Loeffler and Tony Bovaird, "Assessing the Effect of Co-Production," in *CoProduction and Co-Creation: Engaging Citizens in Public Services*, ed., Taco Brandsen et al. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 269–280.

2   Annika Agger and Dorthe Hedensted Lund, "Collaborative Innovation in the Public Sector: New Perspectives on the Role of Citizens?" *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 21, no. 3 (September 2017), 17–38.

3   Sanna Tuurnas, Jari Stenvall and Pasi-Heikki Rannisto, "The impact of co-production on frontline accountability: the case of the conciliation service," *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 82, no. 1 (March 2016): 131–149; Carmen Sirianni, *Investing in Democracy: Engaging Citizens in Collaborative Governance* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Inst Press, 2019).
Chris Ansell and Alison Gash, "Stewards, Mediators, and Catalysts: Toward a Model of Collaborative Leadership," *The Innovation Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2012): 1–21.

Urban Development and User Involvement in Denmark

Danish planning law ensures citizens' rights to involvement in general and to have their say before plans are approved. The law, however, is formulated as a series of minimum requirements securing some general requirements relating to process, time, and possibilities for objecting. In practice, the municipalities are responsible for carrying out the involvement process, and scope and method are therefore highly influenced by the individual municipality's interpretation of the "greatest possible extent."

The process and the tools are by no means perfect, and there will always be projects where the minimum requirements for involvement are not respected, to the great dismay of citizens. In this article, however, we will focus on projects with a high degree of citizen involvement.

Since the 1990s, the largest municipalities have become the main drivers of innovative urban planning, with Danish architectural studios providing design expertise. Citizens are increasingly viewed as co-creators of public governance and are invited to participate in defining the problems at hand and designing and implementing new and bold solutions. There is now broad recognition amongst municipalities and developers that citizen involvement is an essential democratic aspect of urban planning and design and provides valuable insights and perspectives. When well executed, an involvement process can provide insights into local values, challenges, and needs and thus help describe, frame, and create project ownership. Municipalities are always searching for new ways to engage with citizens in co-creation and support these processes, and citizen involvement is now an integral part of municipal tenders. To win a project, design studios must prove that they can conduct an involvement process in a persuasive, innovative, and democratic manner.

While scholarly literature points out how the relationship between public professionals and citizens is vital for the degree of co-production, there is remarkably little scientific focus on the practitioner's perspective. Part of the scholarly literature focuses on the role of citizens in co-production, emphasizing how public professionals often play a dominant role in these relations and that many public professionals tend to grant citizens a passive role as clients, providing public services "for" instead of "with" affected citizens.[1] Consequently, many citizens feel "overruled" and/or services do not "reach their target," as citizen input is often not addressed to tailor public services.[2] Other scholars point out how co-production as a governance arrangement changes the working culture of public service professionals, which must take on a more "enabling" or "catalysing" role to mobilize and integrate citizen resources to develop public policies or services.[3]

Too much of a good thing?

Traditionally, research has typically been understood as the process of generating accurate and unbiased knowledge following a scientific method.

4   Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg, *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (London: Sage, 2009), 1–16.

5   Hilary Bradbury, "Introduction: How to situate and define action research," in *The SAGE handbook of action research* (London: Sage, 2015), 1–9.

By examining information presented as data and facts, which are precise representations of "reality," researchers can establish a reasonably solid foundation for drawing empirical conclusions and, subsequently, for developing generalizations and constructing theories.[4] Productive involvement in urban planning and design requires recognizing that all actors' expertise should have a place in the knowledge generation process. While citizens have valuable contributions to offer, it is unrealistic to expect them to solve the technical, functional, financial, and aesthetic requirements of urban planning and design projects. These responsibilities fall to planning and design professionals, who play a critical role. By acknowledging and utilizing the unique expertise of each actor involved, urban planning and design projects can create more holistic and practical solutions that benefit the entire community.

As practitioners, we believe that conventional inquiry methods have not kept pace with our changing world because, with some exceptions, they are losing relevance for the larger public and, too often, reinforce the status quo. Our response is adjacent to the dynamic action research approach which is a democratic and participative research method. It combines action and reflection, theory and practice, to pursue practical solutions to pressing concerns. Action research is a pragmatic co-creation of knowledge with people, not just about people.[5]

When we design new landscapes, we aim to behave actionably by positively impacting a range of factors, from enhancing biodiversity to strengthening social sustainability. We understand that partnerships and participation are central to the success of our work and that it is essential to take a reflexive and critical stance on what limits and enables our and others' participation.

Action researchers, who orient with a different set of assumptions, bring a more participative, democratic, and practical response to the issues of our time. We do this not to be nice or politically correct but because the nature of life, power, structural exclusion, and inter-generational injustice demands it. Our design approach informs how we work with user involvement and how the input is translated into knowledge and design. Engagement, identity, and ownership are keywords in our work to create meaningful value and change. Through engaging co-creation processes and innovative hands-on pilot projects, we strive to create permanent change and development in collaboration with the end-users. To achieve this goal, the process, format, and scope of participation must be adapted to each project and collaborator.

The focus on the importance of democratic urban development over the last few decades has, in many places, resulted in a "the more, the better" approach to citizen engagement, the idea being that you can never really have too much involvement. This approach creates a risk of involvement becoming an end in and of itself, thereby diminishing the focus on making user involvement matter for the overall quality of the final

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

project. The lack of meaningful change and unmet expectations often leads to "participation fatigue," wherein you lose the engagement of the citizens when they absent themselves from partaking.

This is especially true of socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which are often subject to several different revitalization and renovation projects simultaneously or in close succession. People are willing to participate when it feels relevant but get frustrated when the process is bureaucratic or irrelevant or if the goal and output need to be clarified. In our experience, focusing on quality over quantity is crucial. Who should be involved in what should be considered carefully—it is not necessary for everyone to participate simultaneously or in all phases of a design process. On the contrary, some people, such as children or socially marginalized people, need special attention and methods to be involved. In contrast, others may only be interested in contributing to specific parts of the project.

Transforming the places where people live can create feelings of insecurity, distrust, and resistance. Therefore, communication is vital. From the beginning, provide residents with a clear overview of the project (goals, expected outputs, project owners) and the process (what will happen when, how long will it take). Let residents know when and where to get more information and when they can be heard or involved. Moreover, make it clear from the beginning what they can and cannot influence. People will more often get frustrated about broken promises and expectations than about limitations on the extent of their influence. Throughout the process, let residents know how their inputs will be and have been used in the overall project. Have feedback meetings where design choices and their background are presented and explained.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place—the Role of the Urban Planner

Responsibility for the success of a public space project always falls on the municipality. To successfully balance the needs of stakeholders, urban planners must engage in a transparent and inclusive planning process that involves all relevant stakeholders, including citizens, community organizations, and elected officials. This can help ensure that all voices are heard and that diverse perspectives are considered in the planning process.

At the same time, they must be willing to make difficult decisions and trade-offs to move forward with a plan or design that meets the broader community's needs. This can involve making choices that may not be popular with some stakeholders but are necessary to achieve the project's overall goals.

This approach emphasizes collaboration and participation and recognizes the value of incorporating multiple perspectives and inputs into the design process. It also helps foster more creativity and innovation in the design process, as different stakeholders can bring new ideas and insights

to the table and help develop designs that are more responsive to the needs and desires of future users and the broader community.

To help move forward with a plan or design that is economical, functional, and reflective of the community's needs and values, urban planners need to acquire the role of facilitator of collaborative and inclusive planning processes and navigators of difficult decisions. In addition to balancing the needs and interests of various stakeholders, urban planners and designers also play a crucial role in the political decision-making process. This involves working with elected officials and other government leaders to develop plans and designs that align with the community's vision and priorities and are feasible and sustainable from a financial and logistical perspective.

Urban planners must also be aware of the political context in which they operate and be prepared to navigate complex political dynamics to advance their plans and designs. This can involve building relationships and coalitions with key decision makers and advocating for their plans and designs to the broader public to build project support and momentum.

With everything at stake for the municipal project managers, they must get all the help they can get. They need a design collaborator who can act as a partner and conveyor of difficult decisions —a human lightning rod.

When Everyone Is an Expert—What Is the Role of the Designer?

Residents are increasingly recognized as experts in their own right, making them an invaluable source of knowledge in urban development and design processes —they are experts on their neighbourhood, the life lived there, and the qualities and challenges. But, as they are not technical experts, residents are not responsible for creating viable design solutions. Laypeople's spontaneous design choices often express a deeper-lying need or wish rather than an opinion of appropriate design solutions or aesthetics.

In a quantity-driven approach to participation, project owners often want to give the citizens as much decision-making power as possible, both in terms of programming and physical solutions—and in this situation, the term "professional" almost becomes a dirty word. While this might work in small-scale, hyper-local projects, it is hard to transfer to the complexity of modern urban development, where it would be doing citizens a disservice to place responsibility for what are essentially technical solutions in their hands.

Participation and co-creation are collaborative processes where citizens have an equal seat at the table alongside technicians, designers, authorities, and other stakeholders. Their input should be taken seriously, if not literally. This places particular demands on the planning and design process in which professionals must carefully create the proper framework for citizens to give meaningful input. When discussing design with end-users, designers should provide expertise, know-how, and consultation

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

to ensure that the result meets the community's needs. Involvement should create formats that encourage knowledge-sharing between designers and residents/users—and it should be about content rather than form.

In this sense, the designer becomes a facilitator who ensures citizens can contribute meaningfully to the discussion. The designer also becomes an interpreter, as a large part of the design process is interpreting the underlying needs and translating this into designs that are both meaningful to citizens and aesthetic and performative urban landscapes.

SLA in Practice

Our design philosophy shapes how we approach co-creation and view the citizens' role. Participation and user involvement are essential parts of our working method and a prerequisite for a successful project and a good process. We work with three primary goals for our involvement process: understanding of place, understanding the project, and strengthening local ownership—and we use different methods to achieve each of the three sub-goals.

While vague and ambiguous goals prevent effective stakeholder involvement, precise and well-defined objectives are the first step towards a successful project with the citizens. At SLA, we have an anthropological approach to studying human welfare and well-being in the city. We work analytically and qualitatively and are attentive to the users' wishes and needs before and during a project and after it is complete. Architecture and urban planning are about increasing the quality of life for people. Therefore, it is at least as important to seek insight into people's social and cultural lives as into materials and scale before the drawing work begins.

Understanding of Place

In human geography, "place" refers to a specific location distinguished by its physical and human characteristics. These characteristics include natural features such as climate, landscape, vegetation, and human elements such as culture, language, and social organization. Places are not just physical locations but also have a symbolic and emotional significance to individuals and communities. People attach meanings and values to places based on their experiences, memories, and relationships. Therefore, the concept of place in human geography is not just about physical space but also about the social and cultural practices within that space.

At our studio, we put great effort into understanding the unique character of the places we work with and recognizing their intrinsic social, architectural, and economic value. Socially, gaining a deep insight into local traditions, communities, and perspectives is crucial for creating viable and acceptable solutions that reflect the needs and desires of the people who will use and inhabit these spaces. Architecturally, new insights can help break habitual thinking and lead to innovative, site-specific, functional, and aesthetically pleasing solutions. Economically, we recognize that a robust

foundation helps minimize mistakes and create well-thought-out, attractive projects that add value to the surrounding area.

Traditionally, site analyses have relied heavily on quantitative methods, which involve counting, measuring, and weighing various aspects of urban life, movement, and users. While this approach provides valuable data, it fails to capture the subjective experiences and social exchanges integral to understanding a place. At SLA, we rely on a qualitative method that involves interacting with people and learning from their experiences to gain a more nuanced understanding of the site. This approach allows us to uncover each place's unique qualities, characteristics, and people. By creating architecture deeply rooted in the local context, we can create functional and beautiful spaces and help preserve and strengthen each place's identity and potential. This is especially important in a globalized world where local characteristics are at risk of being overshadowed by international trends and standards.

Understanding the Project

The collaboration between design experts and citizens who are experts in their everyday lives poses the question of how best to merge the two pools of knowledge. An essential part of a citizen involvement process is communicating the project, its possibilities, and its limitations in a way that makes the form, purpose, and scope completely clear to the citizens. The citizens do not have to be responsible for solving every task or challenge; instead, their knowledge must be interpreted and incorporated by the design professionals to create a tailored solution. By clearly communicating the purpose and success criteria of each task and ensuring that the involvement takes place at the right time, the involvement can contribute to new knowledge, perspectives, and insights into the site and the project, which we as designers could not have found ourselves.

By involving citizens in the design process, we can learn more about the social, cultural, and environmental factors that impact the site and the surrounding community. This information can help us develop a more comprehensive and sustainable design solution that meets the needs of all stakeholders, including the citizens themselves.

Ownership

User ownership and inclusion are crucial in creating meaningful change and value in urban design. This can be achieved by engaging in continuous co-creation processes and experimenting with innovative, hands-on pilot projects that involve residents and future users at every stage of the design process.

Pilot projects allow us to test and explore ideas in a physical context, considering how they can enhance the existing environment and strengthen the city's life. Through this process, we can foster a sense of local commitment and ownership, leading to quicker and more immediate

development. Moreover, these projects are often low-cost and require minimal bureaucracy, making them a practical and effective way to create value from day one.

At the heart of our approach is a qualitative development process emphasizing continuous dialogue and co-creation with local citizens, project stakeholders, and city development authorities. Unlike more standardized participatory processes confined to the initial idea phase, our co-creation method aims to make the participatory process a permanent fixture throughout the project's life cycle. By involving the community, we can reimagine how we design and evolve our cities, creating shared spaces that reflect each place's unique identity and cultural cohesion.

Urban development is not a closed process that starts and ends with architects and planners. Instead, it is an ongoing and highly social process that must evolve long after the design team has completed their work. By collaborating closely with all stakeholders and encouraging co-creation, we create the right conditions for continuous dialogue between clients and users long after the project handover. That way, we hope to foster vibrant, inclusive cities that reflect the needs and aspirations of the people who live there.

Project as Process

The idea that co-creation is permanent means that involvement is not limited to the initial design phase but impacts the design to enable citizens to continually engage in their city, neighbourhood, and social context. The following is a simplified graphic representation of the steps that lead to a successful project and subsequent dissemination and internalization of learnings from that project:

fig. 1 SLA, project as process, 2016
(author's illustration).

1. Design: activities related to the design phase.
2. Realization: activities related to the construction phase.
   For example, helping to cultivate the land, sow the seeds, and plant the trees.
3. Maintenance: active involvement in the maintenance of the project. Care of the plantings and biodiversity, e.g., spreading of seeds, spreading of dead wood, and weeding of unwanted species.

Practice What You Preach!

4 Learning: use the project to increase citizens' awareness of natural processes. Learning about nature, nature types, the interaction of man and nature, and a deeper understanding of why nature is essential to people—rationally and aesthetically.

5 Sharing: "share" the project visually to increase its reach and, for example, sharing experiences on social media, sharing experiences with other urban areas or cities, and sharing seeds and plants.

All projects go through a process that reflects the context in which the project is located, with many factors such as financial and political framework, history of a place or neighbourhood and much more. In the next chapter, we will present a handful of cases that can help explain our practitioner's point of view.

The first is from the city of Aarhus, where, for the last fifteen years, the municipality has worked intently on developing a new neighbourhood on the harbour in what used to be a heavily industrialized area. For more than five years, SLA has been engaged in the landscaping and analysis of the harbour area, and the experience from this will shed light on the use of pilot projects as a design and engagement tool.

Next is the Gellerup Urban Park, also in Aarhus, and is the largest landscape transformation in a socially challenged neighbourhood in Denmark. The project has followed a more stringent process design compared to the Forest Bath, with a clear scope for the area, finances, political backing and demands for the inclusion of varying groups of citizens at various times.

Finally, we will present the case of Hans Tavsens Park, which is part of the portfolio of the local area renewal project in the neighbourhood of Nørrebro. We include this project because it presents interesting perspectives on the intense citizen involvement and its possibilities and challenges.

The Forest Bath

The Forest Bath is an example of how a pilot project can help shape the narrative for an entire neighbourhood and help citizens put images on their wishes for the future. It is also an example of how a first iteration can inform subsequent iterations. While this first iteration had no user involvement, user input played a significant role in subsequent phases and iterations.

During the Aarhus Festival 2018, SLA made several landscape projects of very short temporality. In the case of the Forest Bath, six hundred trees were moved to Aarhus Ø to create a green, temporary urban space right by the unused part of the harbour front. This installation transformed the industrial infrastructure and harbour area into a six-hundred-metre-long green public space, showing the opportunities for a nature-based urban development of Aarhus' new neighbourhood, Aarhus Ø. Water atomizers between the tree trunks were used for irrigation of the trees and to create an ever-changing atmosphere of mist, temperature, and humidity.

We carefully selected the different types of trees according to their ability to clean the pollution from cars, reduce CO_2, and create a pleasant microclimate on the wind-swept boulevard by the water. The stimulating urban space maximized the effects of nature on human health, adding stress-reducing qualities and strengthening social and community-shaping effects, thus improving both environmental and social sustainability. After the Aarhus Festival, the six hundred trees were moved to the Gellerup district in Aarhus, where they were replanted in the SLA-designed city park as a part of the large-scale physical transformation of the neighbourhood.

With the Forest Bath, we show how to use nature to solve various urban challenges while increasing people's quality of life and mental and physical health. The project builds upon the Japanese term "Shinrin Yoku," which translates to "forest bathing." The Forest Bath shows how an equal balance between the built and the grown environment can create a whole city with a quality of life, meaning, good health, and well-being for all citizens.

The Aarhus Festival is part of a cultural strategy of the municipality of Aarhus. As it coincided with the municipality's efforts to develop, densify, and revamp the old industrial harbour, it was a common--sense move to bring part of the festival to Aarhus Ø in 2018 to help

fig. 2   SLA, the Forest Bath, Aarhus, September 2018, the temporary urban installation of 600 trees at Aarhus Ø (Tina Stephansen).

fig. 3   Aarhus municipality, compilation of citizen involvement, 2023 (retrieved from https://aarhus.dk/nyt/teknik-og-miljoe/2023/ marts-2023/opsamling-paa-borger-og-brugerinddragelse-paa-aarhus-oe).

fig. 4   SLA, the Forest Bath, Aarhus, August 2018. The Forest Bath makes the harbour area accessible with community-generating urban life activities and art interventions (Tina Stephansen).

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

activate the area before new inhabitants moved in. In 2023, SLA was invited to contribute to this high-level process by creating a vision for Aarhus Ø. The vision rested on a comprehensive gathering of inputs by citizens that had taken place over several years. The process generated several compilations of data amounting to more than two hundred pages of input, summaries, drawings, and interviews that the municipality had conducted with citizens of all ages and genders.

In the summer of 2023, SLA handed in the site analysis and the vision for the whole of Aarhus Ø. Due to this delivery, and the fact that so many citizens had mentioned the Forest Bath and its natural qualities in the

fig. 5   SLA, visions for Aarhus Ø, Aarhus, August 2023. The new streetscape inspired be the first iteration Forest Bath and new citizen input (author's photo).

fig. 6   SLA, visions for Aarhus Ø, Aarhus, August 2023, the border of the new streetscape (author's photo).

6   Karin Peters, Birgit Elands and Arjen Buijs, "Social interactions in urban parks: Stimulating social cohesion?" *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, Vol.9, no.2 (2010): 93–100; Danielle F. Shanahan et al., "Health Benefits from Nature Experiences Depend on Dose," *Scientific Reports* 6 (2016): n.p.
Christine Milligan et al., "Cultivating health: therapeutic landscapes and older people in northern England," *Social science & medicine*, vol. 58, no. 9 (2004): 1781–93; Byoung-Suk Kweon, William C. Sullivan, and Angela R. Wiley, "Green Common Spaces and the Social Integration of Inner-City Older Adults," *Environment and Behavior*, vol. 30, no. 6 (1998): 832–858.

7   Sandra Gentin, "Outdoor recreation and ethnicity in Europe - a review," *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, vol. 10 (2011): 153–161.

8   Kate Mary Bennett, "Low level social engagement as a precursor of mortality among people in later life," *Age Ageing,* vol. 31, no. 3 (May 2002): 165–8.

compilation of citizen involvement, the city council asked SLA to establish a new and more permanent streetscape based on the design of the original Forest Bath. There were two significant constraints, one being that the new landscape should be able to stand for four years (long permanence), and the other, that the budget would be the same as the original. After some dialogue, it was agreed that the result would be fifty metres of robust landscape that handled many of the challenges and wishes described by the citizens in the compilation.

Gellerup Urban Park

Over the years, the Gellerup neighbourhood in Aarhus has struggled with a bad reputation and negative media attention. It is a socio-economically disadvantaged social housing neighbourhood that over the course of the last four decades, has experienced a concentration of low-income inhabitants, a significantly higher degree of people without education, low employment rates and higher crime rates. This, coupled with the very large planning scale, the physical isolation of the neighbourhood from the rest of Aarhus and consecutive years of low safety ratings, has made this a priority for the housing company, the municipality of Aarhus, and the Danish government. Together, they have initiated a range of social and infrastructural interventions to mitigate the challenges, from refurbishing the housing blocks to relocating part of the municipality to Gellerup to foster more social coherence with the broader city.

The revitalization of Gellerup is a precedent for the development of socially disadvantaged residential areas in Denmark. The project does away with the stringent functionality of modernism, typical of the country's social housing developments, and softens the rough, built-up design language. It has long been recognized that green spaces and elements such as parks, community gardens, trees and fountains promote social interaction and bring people together in cities.[6] Ethnic minorities, for example, use parks as social meeting places to a greater extent than ethnic Danes.[7] Also, for older people, parks and other recreational areas have particular significance as places where they can meet others and new people. For many older people, especially women, loneliness is a significant problem. Perhaps they have lost their spouse and closest friends, and perhaps their next of kin live far away or lack time to visit them. The result is a circular problem because the elderly lack someone to accompany them. They either end up going out less or not meeting other people they might be able to socialize with. This, in turn, means they do not overcome their loneliness or get the natural experiences and exercise that could help increase their quality of life.[8]

As part of the overall transformation, SLA created a park for residents and visitors alike. The overall goal was to create value for residents, whose knowledge of the area and wishes for the future have been the framework for design. Understanding local life, cherished places,

fig. 7 SLA, Gellerup New Nature Park, Brabrand, June 2019. Across the new park are climate proof solutions that provides space for diversity, immersion, and physical activity. Here, the lake as it looks in the new landscaped (Rasmus Hjortshøj).

activities and traditions, challenges, insecurities, and hopes for the future is crucial to creating a successful design. In the chapter below, we will describe how residents were involved early on to give designers a solid basis to work with and how, throughout the process, resident groups provided feedback on the design.

With the help of carefully selected plantings that complement the park's existing green structures, a diverse and safe park is created with lots of urban nature and experiences. The new city park provides space for diversity, immersion, and physical activity. A path runs through the park, connecting the many new functions, making it the area's unifying meeting place, ensuring that walking here never gets dull or unsafe. At the same time, the path forms an essential link to the surrounding areas and invites exercisers and nature lovers from the entire Aarhus area into the park.

The revitalization of Gellerup has resulted in an urban park design that addresses the issues of insecurity and safety. Due to its design and incorporation of input from citizens, municipalities, and housing organizations, it creates a space less prone to vandalism. Another positive outcome of engaging with the citizens is that it gives local users a stronger feeling of ownership of the area since they have been part of the design process from the beginning.

Practice What You Preach!

fig. 8   Gellerup New Nature Park, Brabrand, June 2022. Gellerup Urban Park is designed with residents to improve and strengthen biodiversity in the area (Gamma Film).

Furthermore, the city park is designed to improve and strengthen the biodiversity in the area. It acts as a missing link in (re)connecting Gellerup with the two dominant landscape areas in the immediate vicinity: Skjoldhøjkilen, which is a 3.5-kilometre-long recreational area, and the low-lying valley with streams called Brabrand Ådal. The connectivity with these green infrastructures and the variety of plant species in the area make it possible for many animals to find a habitat in the park. After establishing the park, SLA revisited the site and undertook vegetation surveys in 2019, 2020 and 2023 during the summer months. Between 2019 and 2023, the species richness of plants increased from 188 to 203 species, with sixty-eight native plant species colonizing the area through natural dispersal.

The Process

In any Danish housing association, there is always a board of residents that take decisions on important topics. Following submitting the proposals for Gellerup and Toveshøj, SLA and the municipality drew up a meeting plan to look in depth at specific topics in the urban park. This included meeting with the boards of the two housing associations, with a separate working group called the "Park Committee," focus groups with kids, and

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

fig. 9   SLA, walkthrough with residents in Gellerup, Brabrand, April 2015. Residents in Gellerup were involved early on to give designers a solid basis to work with (author's photo).

fig. 10   SLA, model of Fossen in Gellerup New Nature Park, Brabrand, 2015. The water retention features were changed to include resident inputs. For example, the residents emphasized the detours up through the ramp (author's photo).
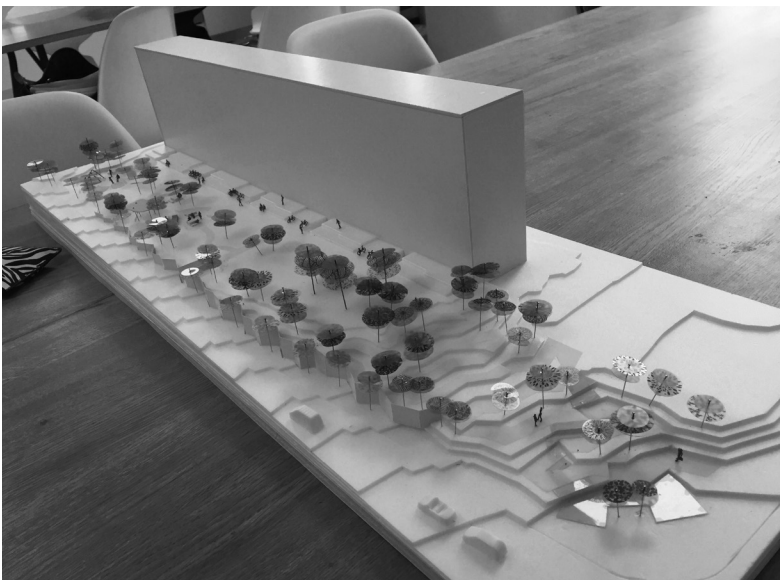
the gardening association "Verdenshaverne." A total of eight groups were formed and coordinated with the housing association, the board, and local civic organizations. Eventually, all designs and plans had to be presented and approved in the general assembly, where all residents were invited.

The idea was that the park design should be conceived in three parts: 1) through an extensive citizens engagement process where the overall programming of the city nature was determined; 2) through the architectural/artistic design of the park's architectural elements such as paths, lighting, pavilions, etc.; and 3) the creation of new nature in collaboration with citizens, maintenance staff, gardeners and biologists to create a city nature where the grown environment supports and strengthens the desired social change. Three rounds of meetings were planned, with three meetings for each topic.

1 Users and SLA present ideas and thoughts on the focus area.
2 SLA presents a reworked proposal, and users comment on the project; SLA then incorporates comments into the proposal.
3 A project proposal is submitted and approved/evaluated by users.

During the focus meetings, each point was communicated to the residents through presentations handed out to stakeholders and residents. Each presentation discussed a particular design issue and presented ways of addressing residents' concerns. The presentations primarily included illustrations of a particular place in the park and its programme, alongside references to what might inspire the next iteration. The following are images taken from such presentations:

fig. 11   SLA, Fossen in Gellerup New Nature Park, Brabrand, September 2017 (author's photo).

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process
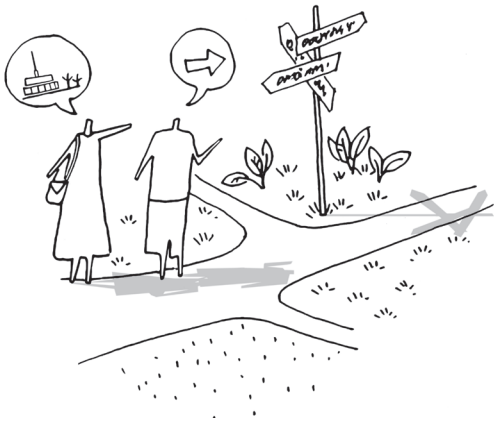
fig. 12 SLA, illustrations from the citizen engagement
material, 2015 (author's illustration).

fig. 13 SLA, Gellerup New Nature Park, Brabrand,
2015, new retention lakes as part of the new
landscape (author's visualization).

[opposite page]

fig. 14 Traditional retention solutions, Denmark, 2014
(author's photo).

fig. 15 Møller og Grønborg Landskab, sØnæs,
Viborg, 2015, example of more accessible
retention solution to inspire the discussion
(author's photo).

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

The learnings from this project are considerable. We have acquired new knowledge about the social housing sector and its inner workings and participated in a project where the municipality's ambitions have matched our own ambitions for social sustainability. We were allowed to be meticulous in the involvement of many participants, including the maintenance crews for whom we produced a maintenance guide for New Nature.

Hans Tavsens Park, Copenhagen

Rainwater management has become a crucial issue for urban planning and policy, and cities worldwide invest heavily in finding and facilitating rainwater solutions. In Copenhagen, cloudbursts have caused severe material and economic damage, with the largest in 2011 resulting in five to seven billion euros in damage and near catastrophic situations for hospitals and emergency services. This led the city to focus on developing

fig. 16 SLA, rendering of the cloudburst management park in Nørrebro, Copenhagen, May 2016 (Beauty and the Bit).

more innovative solutions for managing and using the increasing amounts of water, and a "Cloudburst Management Plan" was formulated in 2012. Hans Tavsens Park and Korsgade play a crucial role in the city's plan: The park is to collect rainwater from nearby areas, which should then be directed through Hans Tavsensgade and Korsgade into Peblinge Lake. Innovative climate adaptation solutions are needed to implement this part of the plan smartly and sustainably meet local needs.

Neighbourhood, Culture, and Site

Due to the density of the city, rainwater or climate adaption solutions for the site must foster more intelligent utilization of the urban space. Citizens have expressed concerns that high-speed car traffic in Korsgade is a source of insecurity, as pupils from Blågårds School travel the street to get to after-school activities by the Peblinge Lake.

This calls for a combination of safer traffic solutions, measures to improve visibility in the street, and the implementation of rainwater solutions. Hans Tavsens Park is quite popular and well-functioning. Redesigning it should foster a more prosperous cultural life and more vital local ownership. Furthermore, rethinking the connection between Hans Tavsens Park and Blågård Schools offers a chance to create synergies between the park and school areas and a new multifunctional street design.

The site is located in the Nørrebro district, a dense city area close to Copenhagen city centre. The area is known as a multicultural and diverse area with engaged and activist citizen groups. Narrow streets connect classic five-storey housing blocks from the early 1900s with prefabricated social housing from the 1980s.

As part of the cloudburst management plan, the park must be able to collect 7,000 m³ of rainwater. This means extensive terrain changes must be made in the park. The water to be retained comes primarily from the park itself, Assistens Cemetery, and neighbouring homes and must be retained to avoid damage to nearby properties.

The location of the park's cloudburst basins (valleys) is based on a desire to preserve as many large trees as possible. However, the work on the terrain changes means that around sixty trees will be felled. At the same time, 217 new trees will be planted in Hans Tavsens Park and fifty-one in the public space known as Mellemrummet. Copenhagen municipality has budgeted 55 million DKK for the entire project.

Approach

Today, entire generations now live their lives mainly in the city. Many grow up in the city and are born, live, love, work, and die in Copenhagen. At the same time, more people are moving in, so city dwellers live closer together (but even further from nature). While pollution is getting thicker, temperatures are getting warmer. The downpours are heavier and more frequent. This places great demands on the city's design and urban spaces

fig. 17   SLA, renderings of Korsgade in the dense
          city area of Nørrebro, May 2016 (Beauty
          and the Bit).

and affects the quality of our everyday life in the city. And that is why both Copenhagen and its inhabitants need urban nature.

City nature is not just nature in the city. City nature is a concept that gives life in the city a whole new meaning and makes the city function better in practice while at the same time allowing city dwellers to feel the aesthetic sense of nature that we humans lost touch with when we moved from the countryside to the city.

City nature allows us to survive in the city and makes life in the city worth living. City nature has several valuable properties. It can solve many of the problems our cities face today by utilizing its fantastic ability to adapt.

Practice What You Preach!

Rising temperatures are causing urban overheating, pollution makes us sick, and climate change is causing torrential rain, flooding our roads, and destroying natural habitats for insects and birds. These are all problems that we will only see more of in the future—and problems that we endeavour to address in all our work with city nature.

As if that were not enough, nature also has an unrivalled aesthetic value. Nature can solve the practical problems of cities and enhance the quality of life by creating sensory experiences, smells, sounds, and variety that colour our everyday lives and moods. Nature makes us happier and more relaxed, enhancing our senses and desire to create. We call these qualities the amenity value of city nature.

Process

Hans Tavsens Park is just one of many urban renewal projects set in municipalities all over Denmark. Funded partially by municipalities and the state, they aim to enhance a neighbourhood physically, socially, and culturally. The work starts by formulating a five-year programme, a collaboration between citizens and planners from the municipality.

The purpose of the Nørrebro renewal programme was to make living, working, and staying in Inner Nørrebro more attractive by creating visible physical improvements, climate adaptation, stronger ties across actors and residents, and promoting new partnerships.

Nørrebro has always been a neighbourhood with a vibrant civil society and countless community projects, initiatives, organizations, and associations. The challenge was that many of these initiatives were not collaborating on a common strategy or goal for the neighbourhood. Therefore, the renewal programme entered the area with a unifying and facilitating role to set the neighbourhood on a more collaborative course. They conducted a wide array of involvement processes, such as children's workshops to inform the development of new playgrounds and global workshops for all citizens inside local schools and in the public space, to name just a few.

The original purpose of Hans Tavsens Park was to open the landscape to the school and create a common green space in the large park — especially for children and their families. Therefore, the focus has been co-creating with the school and parents from here. The project's collaboration with the school was challenging, and the project quickly grew together with the renovation of Korsgade and a larger cloudburst plan for the area. The overall project won the Nordic Built Cities Challenge in 2016, and work continued from the winning project sketch in co-creation with the residents and stakeholders involved.

The result of the entire involvement process under the renewal programme was used as the basis for the tender process. Since handing in the winning project sketch, SLA has continued collaborating and co-creating with the involved residents and stakeholders. Whenever there

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

fig. 18   SLA, eastern part of the Hans Tavsens Park, Copenhagen, 2016. The playground on the right is based on input from kids from the school (author's visualization).

fig. 19   SLA, western part of Hans Tavsens Park, Copenhagen, 2016. Notice the how the school yard is opened up. The additions to the park support the schools' activities and are used by the public whenever the kids are not there (author's visualization).

fig. 20   SLA, rendering of Hans Tavsens Park as seen from the west, May 2016 (Beauty and the Bit).
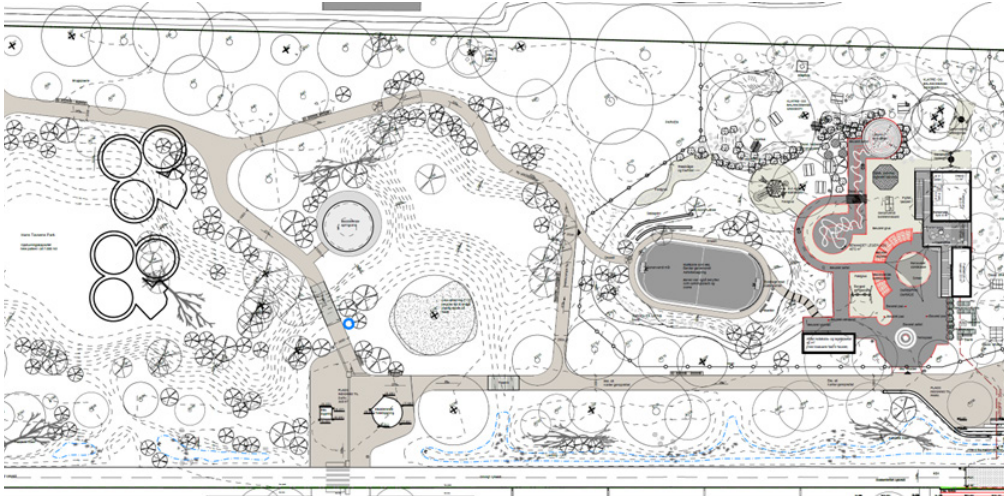
was a community event, SLA and the municipal planners from the renewal programme would be there with giant posters of the park and descriptions of the process so that people could gather around and interact with it even after the event. As part of the renewal programme, series of meetings were organized with the citizens and the group of fast responders was tasked with making fast decisions to help ease an otherwise heavily bureaucratic process. They also arranged separate workshops with students from the adjacent school, focusing solely on playground design, as well as an open playground day, where anyone could pass by and meet the planners and playground experts.

Conclusion

Urban planning and the design of public space is a complicated business. With this paper, we have attempted to draw a simplified picture of how we work, the context, and the requirements this puts on us as practitioners.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

Being an interdisciplinary studio, SLA strives to develop solutions where design, biology, anthropology, and many other disciplines go hand in hand. From our perspective, this is the only way to solve the many wicked problems we face today. We do not pretend to know all the answers to the future of urban planning and design. Nor do we think that our way of working is the only way. However, we hope that the cases and the descriptions in this paper will shed some light on some of the practical realities of working in urban planning and design.

All three cases strive to involve citizens to the broadest possible extent, but they do so very differently from each other. In Aarhus, inputs from citizens are used in an iterative process that started several years ago using different temporary measures to strengthen a narrative about a place. In Gellerup, citizen engagement is engrained in the institutional setup of the housing association with the municipality as a major actor, and in the case of Hans Tavsens Park, a meticulous process of involvement and iterative design exercises has been conducted as part of the renewal project (under the municipality), inspiring discussions and design input.

SLA has had varying roles in the different projects, but we have never been the sole responsible for the planning and execution of the involvement process. However, it has been expected of us that we would be able participate in the process, to embody the knowledge gained, and to transform it into iterative thinking and designs that were recognizable to the people involved. We believe that the interdisciplinary method is the way forward if we want to solve the multiple challenges that modern projects pose.

Cidália F. Silva
School of Architecture,
Art and Design and Lab2PT,
University of Minho

Gabriela Trevisan
ProChild CoLAB

Mariana Carvalho
ProChild CoLAB

Diana Gouveia
School of Architecture, Art
and Design and Lab2PT,
University of Minho; Department
of Architecture, KU Leuven

The Palace of Imagination

—

*A Way of Co-creating with Children
in the Emboladoura Neighbourhood,
Guimarães*

The aim of this paper is to explain how the "Palace of Imagination" (PI), funded by the Portuguese government programme Bairros Saudáveis (Healthy Neighbourhoods) in 2020, was co-created with its residents, primarily children and young people, in the Emboladoura neighbourhood on the western edge of the municipality of Guimarães. The PI aimed to correct the absence of collective public spaces, particularly covered spaces that can house different groups and host various activities, through the co-construction of the multifunctional collective structures. Starting with an explanation of how the idea first came to us and continuing through the process of realizing it, we outline the methodology, structured in four action verbs ("interdialogue," inhabit, recreate, and activate), how we engaged residents, the project's transdisciplinary approach, and the relevance given to aesthetic quality. We conclude by outlining the outcomes and results of the project as well as its potential for replication.

Finding the Way

The Palace of Imagination (PI) is both a process and a series of small, multifunctional structures and collective spaces that were built to tackle the needs of the residents of Emboladoura neighbourhood using different participatory strategies. The PI aims to convert socio-spatial vulnerability into a transformative movement, where each "individual being" and "the collective being" can expand their imaginary, and thus overcome external and self-imposed oppression.

The idea of creating an intervention project in the Emboladoura neighbourhood arose from the partnership between ProChild,[1] a collaborative laboratory which aims to combat poverty and social exclusion of children, and academia (EAAD[2] and Lab2PT[3], UMinho).

Gondar is situated in the Guimarães region, which corresponds to the parishes of the Pevidém group of schools, with a total of 15,453 people (Census 2021). This territory has been affected by every crisis in the textile industry, with cyclical unemployment, high emigration and precarious working conditions. This posed threats to the quality of the family environment, school performance and children's development and well-being.

The neighbourhood, located in the Emboladoura urbanization, on the western border of the Guimarães municipality, was built in 1980 by the "Instituto de Gestão e Alienação do Património Habitacional do Estado, IGAPHE (Institute for the Management and Alienation of the State Housing Patrimony), currently "Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana," IHRU (Institute for Housing and Urban Renewal), and is identified with the number 1135. It is a housing complex consisting of 231 residential units and eighteen non-residential units, with housing conditions that are very precarious and in need of urgent intervention, both in terms of the renovation of the housing blocks and the system of collective spaces. This neighbourhood was selected as a priority area for intervention due to the high levels of poverty in this community and, consequently, of its children.

To address the problems of this extremely underprivileged place, the transdisciplinary action-research team joined efforts with a local partner, Fraterna, and invited this established social solidarity institution to be the promoter of the project and to join us in the application for funding to the Bairros Saudáveis (Healthy Neighbourhoods) government programme, in November 2020[4]. Fortunately, we were granted the maximum funding available for a project, to the value of 50,000 euros. This allowed the project to become a reality. Although involving a multitude of community generations, children and young people played a quintessential part in the co-creation and co-making of the eighteen different activities between October 12, 2021 and December 10, 2022. Having been neglected for decades by official institutions, these residents were involved in a process that aimed to enhance their collective life and their sense of belonging.

During Covid-19 lockdowns, the team looked for effective ways to involve children and young people in the assessment of community needs that was crucial to the planning of future interventions in the neighbourhood. Given the impossibility of going to the field, children and young people worked with the local team in building a survey that was handwritten by them and then distributed in the mailboxes of all residents.

When asked "if I could choose" for the changes perceived as most important, residents responded on a need for a space to accommodate a diversity of uses, such as: a leisure/living space with shelter from the rain/sun; a space for sports activities; a play space; a study/training space for children and young people; a space for cultural initiatives; and a space for creative workshops, etc.

On analysis of the community's proposals, it became clear that a place where people could meet with shelter from different climatic conditions would be the first one to address. Also, in keeping with a way that always sought to bridge the gap between the individual and the collective, we embraced empathy for the "other" as a tool for dialogue and the easing of tensions, which are not always simple to manage in interpersonal interactions, but are essential for carrying out participatory projects.

Walking the Way

The selected methodology for building the PI, including transdisciplinary work, community involvement, and especially children and young people does not have a long-standing tradition in Portugal, particularly in more deprived and peripheral areas such as this one. In general, participatory processes in architecture that involve different field areas such as education, sociology, and community intervention are not commonly found, particularly the right to the place, to the territory, and listening to children's views on their needs and views on the public space shared with different generations.

The continuous transdisciplinary endeavour by combining the field of architecture (through ProChild CoLAB, EAAD and Lab2Pt, UMinho researchers) with the fields of sociology of childhood, fine arts, and design contributed to making this PI a reality by active involvement with the neighbourhood's children on a weekly basis for one year.

The main goal and justification of the PI was to respond to the needs identified by residents and institutions in the neighbourhood in the preliminary diagnosis, correcting the absence of collective public spaces, particularly covered spaces that can house different groups and host various activities that promote healthier lives, through the co-construction of the multifunctional community space.

The participatory process used a methodology that applies four action verbs to materialise the PI objectives. Within each verb, different activities were planned to address specific needs:

5 The Palace of Imagination was developed under the coordination of Fraterna, an entity that ethically safeguards the consent of children with their parents/legal guardians.

1 "Interdialogue" (bridging the space between "I" and the "Other"). The interdialogue workshops were designed with the community to discuss the goals of the construction of the PI (figure 1).[5]

2 "Inhabit" the neighbourhood (walking and mapping workshops) (figure 2), the play (celebrating International Play Day), the study (children using the wooden structures to do their homework), the food (bread making and vegetarian cooking workshops), family physical and mental health (through free sessions for children, young people, and professionals with a paediatrician and a psychiatrist), and the fabrics (reusing waste from the textile industries in the construction of the pieces).

fig. 1 Interdialogue through the "Communitary café." Launch of the project to the community and discussion of their needs and skills to participate and where they would like the structure of the Palace to be located. Guimarães, November 29, 2021. © Children from the Emboladoura neighbourhood.

fig. 2 Inhabit my neighbourhood. Walking and mapping workshop with the community. Guimarães, December 20, 2021. © Fraterna.

fig. 3 "Activate": universal prevention and wellness promotion with sessions on prevention of drug abuse. Guimarães, October 7, 2022. © Fraterna.

fig. 4 Recreating the study with children. This was the longest co-creation process with children (from February to September 2022). We started in February 2022, by making a 1:1 model with carboard boxes, and continued by making models on other scales. Guimarães, February 2022. © ProChild CoLAB.

3 "Activate": universal prevention, and wellness promotion with sessions on prevention of drug abuse (figure 3) and activating exchange with the environment and the sky (global communication), through the community market, for example.

4 "Recreate" the study (building the wooden structures) (figure 4), recreating the wall, the floor and the roof (by building the palace's structures and creating a wall/network of communication between the project team and the residents); and, finally, recreating the dialogue among all involved.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

fig. 5   Co-making of the wooden structures with children to improve their study conditions. Guimarães, July 29, 2022. © ProChild CoLAB.

The longest co-creation process with children was to "recreate" the study. We started in February 2022 by making a 1:1 scale space with cardboard boxes, and pursued this for seven months until September 2022, creating models, co-building the wooden structures, and exploring different appropriations. After co-making two different prototypes with children, we arrived at the final design proposal, which was built by a professional carpenter (figure 5).

Joining People in the Way

Considering how disadvantaged and isolated this community is, inclusion and affordability have long been major concerns. We dealt with many dimensions of inclusion by interacting with the community, young people, and the elderly population, as well as people who face a range of difficulties, such as addiction.

Different levels of involvement were also present in the stages of the PI, with children being more actively involved in appropriation and implementation of activities, whereas adults were participants and helped in the improvement of neighbourhood relationships.

Children and young people are always important stakeholders in these processes, although they are often left behind or do not actively participate in expressing their desires and needs. "For children, the right to the city is the condition of their own citizenship. This does not constitute a legal proclamation nor is it a granted statute. It is, moreover, something that results directly from public policies for children and for the city, which guarantee the participation of children and adults in the construction

The Palace of Imagination

6   Manuel Jacinto Sarmento, "Infância e cidade: restrições e possibilidades," *Educação*, no. 2 (May 2018): 16.

of the urban territory according to logics of inclusion and sustainability."[6] One of the key goals of the PI was to improve the neighbourhood's collective spatial conditions through a co-creative and co-making process of the PI's physical structures (figures 6–7) to meet previously identified community needs.

Another important goal was to integrate these residents into the PI's structures in order to consolidate their various forms of appropriation and sense of belonging, both at the individual and the collective level (figure 8).

fig. 6 "Activate": universal prevention and wellness promotion with sessions on prevention of drug abuse. Guimarães, October 7, 2022. © Fraterna.

fig. 7   Building the prototype of the wooden
         structures and furniture pieces with children.
         Guimarães, April 4, 2022. © ProChild CoLAB.

fig. 8   Activate exchange: local market in
         Emboladoura neighbourhood. Guimarães,
         September 9, 2022. © Leszio.

Therefore, alongside the involvement of children and young people in the building process, they were also consulted on how to expand the use of the study structures. Using these suggestions, the team was able to design the wooden structures to meet the different purposes intended by them. The result was a diverse programme (March 2022) structured into six verbs: 1. play (room for board games, space to play); 2. look/listen; 3. be/talk/rest; 4. read; 5. enable better IT conditions; and finally, 6. arrange storage space, cabinets, etc. (figure 9).

The project not only involved the inhabitants, but also tried to consistently mobilise endogenous resources that could contribute to meeting

principles of cost affordability regarding the construction of the structures and implementation of the activities. Local communities often possess important resources that are not always acknowledged as valuable enough to be included in such projects, be it a particular craft (such as construction, textile expertise, etc.) or specific businesses that are willing to contribute to projects like the PI.

Finally, by integrating the local residents, particularly children and young people, inclusion and participation principles are thus addressed. In doing so, a revitalised sense of belonging is also achieved, which was one of the PI's core objectives from the outset. The PI's main goal was to ensure that the activities implemented would benefit the local
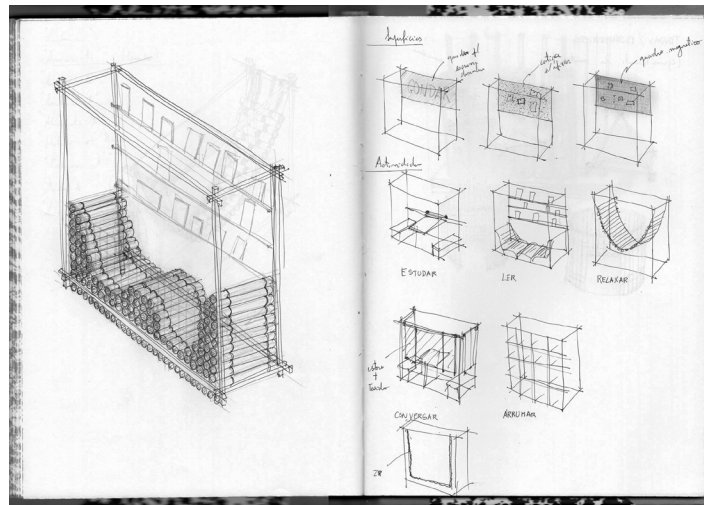
fig. 9   Study of the expansion of the use of the study structures. April 2022. © Mariana Carvalho, ProChild CoLAB.

residents and the citizens at large. During all phases of the built project, civil society and partners were crucial to achieving the desired outcomes. The communication strategy, via regular media posts, ensured that the information reached a larger audience, thus opening the neighbourhood to civil society and helping to reduce the existing social stigma. Several events brought both local residents and outsiders together, such as the exchange market (vendors and buyers) (figure 8); International Play Day (figure 10); the concert by the band Quatro e Meia (figure 11); and the vegetarian food workshop on International Women's Day (figure 12), promoting gender equality in a notoriously sexist setting.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

fig. 10 Inhabit play. Celebration of International
        Play Day. Guimarães, May 28, 2022.
        © CMG. Video: https://www.youtube.com/
        watch?v=yefFaQwulZ4

fig. 11 Activate the sky. Concert by the band Quatro
        e Meia. With people from the community
        and teachers and children of the Gondar
        primary school. Guimarães, November
        11, 2022. © Leszio. Video: https://youtu.
        be/3ARBGE4PXEU

fig. 12 Inhabit the food. Workshop on vegetarian
        food. International Women's Day. Guimarães.
        March 3, 2022. © ProChild CoLAB.

fig. 13   Children's persistent involvement in co-making the wooden structures for their study. Guimarães, July 29, 2022. © ProChild CoLAB.

The residents were involved in all stages of the process:

a a survey done with children in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic provided a preliminary analysis to assess what should be the focus of the project. The residents' most critical needs were all related to the basic necessity for a shared covered space and improved study conditions for children and young people;

b via "interdialogue" and "inhabit my neighbourhood," we learnt about the residents' skills, how they would like to participate in the PI, and where its structure should be placed;

c both children and adults participated in the co-making of the wooden structures to "recreate the study."

As a result, children discovered their own handcraft skills and how enjoyable this experience can be (figure 13). The genuine involvement of the local population in the eighteen activities helped strengthen their community ties.

The PI was designed with different stakeholders and partners (figure 14) headquartered in the territory. Many voluntarily gave countless hours of their work, as this was the only way to achieve the proposed goals with such a tight budget (€ 50,000). The stakeholders had different responsibilities and their level of involvement in the project varied, with some of them providing institutional or technical support, whereas others (by their own nature) were responsible for the design and implementation of the different activities. The continuous collaboration between Fraterna (a private social solidarity institution that is the promoting entity), ProChild CoLAB and EAAD, Lab2PT UM in carrying out the various activities proposed should be highlighted.

PALÁCIO DA IMAGINAÇÃO
email: palacio.imaginacao@fraterna.org

ENTIDADE PROMOTORA
Fraterna Centro Comunitário de Solidariedade e Integração Social

ENTIDADES PARCEIRAS
Câmara Municipal de Guimarães
Universidade do Minho LAB2PT/EAAD/UM
ProChild CoLab Against Poverty and Social Exclusion – Association
Junta de Freguesia de Gondar
Associação de Moradores da Emboladoura
Unidade de Saúde Familiar de Pevidém

PROGRAMA PÚBLICO
Bairros Saudáveis

FINANCIAMENTO
Fundo Ambiental
República Portuguesa

COORDENAÇÃO
Sofia Machado (Fraterna)

COORDENAÇÃO CIENTÍFICA
Cidália F. Silva (EAAD.Lab2PT/UM)
Gabriela Trevisan (ProChild CoLab)

GESTÃO FINANCEIRA
Adelina Alves (Fraterna)
Paulo Castelar (Fraterna)

PROJETO DE ARQUITETURA
Cidália F. Silva (EAAD.Lab2PT/UM) - Coordenadora do Projeto
Débora Moura (EAAD.Lab2PT/UM)
Diana Gouveia (EAAD.Lab2PT/UM / Fraterna)
Mariana Carvalho (ProChild CoLab)
Gabriela Trevisan (ProChild CoLab)
Desenvolvimento do projeto com comunidade do Bairro

COMUNICAÇÃO
Sofia Machado (Fraterna)
Ana Martins (Fraterna)
Diana Gouveia (EAAD.Lab2PT/UM / Fraterna)
Débora Moura (EAAD.Lab2PT/UM)

DESIGN E ILUSTRAÇÃO
Alexandra Ribeiro (ProChild CoLab)
Mariana Carvalho (ProChild CoLab)
Crianças do Bairro da Emboladoura

BRINCÁRIO
Crianças do Bairro da Emboladoura
Equipa do Projeto

OUTROS APOIOS
Arcol Cash & Carry
Empresa Vaz da Costa
Fornecedora Outeiro
Laboratório da Paisagem
Dr. Joaquim António da Costa Borges (Médico psiquiatra)
Dra.ª Georgina Monteiro (Médica pediatra)

LOCALIZAÇÃO
Bairro da Emboladoura, Guimarães

fig. 14 Credits of the "Palace of Imagination," with the involvement of numerous fields, partners and stakeholders. © Palácio da Imaginação.

As part of an institution established in the neighbourhood, Fraterna's technicians interacted closely with the community while managing the project and coordinating the various partners in a crucial effort to mobilise endogenous resources, the community's involvement, and facilitate the weekly PI work with children and young people in its facilities. The residents' association, the parish council and the municipality provided logistical support. The local textile company supplied waste and remnant materials to be used in several PI activities. The Landscape Lab promoted environmental awareness actions to bring about changes in attitudes and behaviours towards achieving a cleaner and healthier neighbourhood.

A Way That Crosses Fields

The transdisciplinary nature of the project allowed rigorous knowledge of the territory and its residents to be obtained, as well as the necessary proximity to the local population to build a sound, trusting relationship. This multilevel analysis of the community's desires and needs was achieved with the help of the different professionals involved in the diagnosis process.

The activities designed to address these needs required experts from different fields of knowledge, such as sociology, visual arts, social work,

educational sciences, paediatrics, psychiatry, writing, psychology, music, social education, and primary school education, all of whom participated in the different stages of the process.

Architects were involved throughout the whole process, by mapping the place, co-creating the wooden structures with children and young people, and designing the three main structures of the PI (the six wooden structures, the covered collective space, and the Imaginarium). Sociologists and educational experts designed strategies to involve the community, particularly children and young people. Health professionals were responsible for the prevention activities carried out with children and young people, working closely with a psychologist, a paediatrician and a psychiatrist, all experienced professionals in working with these age groups. Social workers and social educators were particularly important in specific activities, such as the workshops on International Women's Day, by involving the community, and contributing to gender equality awareness in a highly sexist setting.

Achieving the goals would only be possible with a transdisciplinary team such as this one, since expert knowledge was critical in addressing the complexity and dimension of the previously identified needs. In January 9–13, 2023, in the Fa[s]er workshop, sixty architecture students from EAAD. UM worked in the neighbourhood and built eight different architectural devices (a counter for the community kitchen; structures for play, etc.), thus adding a huge value to the PI.

The Aesthetics of the Way

The three languages of the textual, the visual, and the design of built structures are linked in terms of aesthetic quality. The writing was done by crafting a language faithful to the poetry of imagination. The children were directly involved in this process, which comprised activities such as the promotional fundraising video. A careful selection of colours and patterns made with children and young people crafted the distinctive visual language of the PI across all the communication pieces (logos, videos, pamphlets, etc.) (figure 15).

The idea of a distinct aesthetic that incorporates visual quality was thought to be crucial for dispelling the unfavourable perceptions regarding this excluded place.

In terms of the aesthetics of the designed structures, two points must be taken into account: a) the wooden structures are easy to assemble, allowing the project to focus on its goal of "making with the children"; they are also easy to disassemble and to move to another site, as well as being flexible and stimulating free and playful appropriation by children (figure 16); and b) the multipurpose uses of the structure of the palace (figure 17) facing the River Ave valley favour the enjoyment of this beautiful landscape.

The choice of the colour red for this structure, the same colour used in the Guimarães Historic Centre (a World Heritage Site), is an ethical
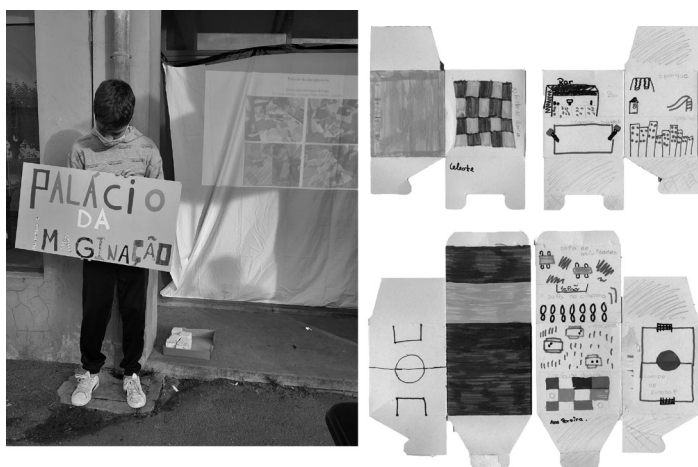
fig. 15   The children were an active part in the creation of the visual language of the "Palace of Imagination" through all the communication processes (logos, videos, pamphlets, etc.). Guimarães, November, 2021. © ProChild CoLAB.

fig. 16   The wooden structures are easy to assemble, to disassemble and to move to another site, as well as being flexible and stimulating free and playful appropriation by children. Guimarães, March 29, 2022. © ProChild CoLAB.

The Palace of Imagination

statement so we do not forget the 99% of this resource- and attention-starved territory. Fostering positive emotions is conducive to revitalising a sense of community, especially among the kids and teenagers who actively took part in selecting the placement of the PI. The project's various events provided local residents with access to cultural experiences, such as a concert by a well-known Portuguese band, International Play Day, a reading session for the community led by a famous author of children's books, and expert-led cooking classes that broadened the residents' experiences. The PI was able to meet people's needs and promote better lifestyles as a result.

A New Way?

The innovative character of this project stems directly from the close relationship between academia — Architecture (EAAD) and Lab2PT — ProChild CoLAB, and all the local stakeholders. Academics are applying their professional understanding of the diffused territory of Vale do Ave to promote concrete changes.

Another critical trait is the transdisciplinarity of the PI, which brings together eleven different fields of knowledge to produce a singular process, to achieve a thorough understanding of the territory and its residents, as well as the necessary proximity to build trust, and to improve the emotional, psychological, and physical conditions of a place inhabited by a very vulnerable population.

The project's participatory strategies differ from the majority of mainstream interventions in underserved areas, which fail to include the local residents, especially children, in all the project's stages—from the

fig. 17   Six flexible wooden structures, a space for study and many other uses. Guimarães, January 25, 2023. © Leszio. Video: https:// youtu.be/6Tz8hzBA1Nw

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

7   Gabriela Trevisan et al., "Infância, espaço
    público e participação: a abordagem do
    território de aprendizagem," in *O Direito das
    crianças à cidade. Perspetivas desde o Brasil e
    Portugal*, ed. Márcia Gobbi Aparecida et al.
    (São Paulo: fe-usp, 2019), 54.

8   Idem, 54–55

diagnosis to making and appropriating the structures—since they require more engagement time regarding the completion of the whole process.

As we have argued elsewhere, building democratic decision-making processes means the possibility for each and every one, according to their responsibilities, to influence the decision about life in common, and this process is the ultimate meaning of participation (which, therefore, does not mean only "taking part," but has an unavoidable dimension of power and is, consequently, inevitably political).[7] In this conception, as we have argued, children are able to exercise concrete political actions, which demands adequate strategies, devices and instruments for children's political participation, not to be confused with the institutional rules of representation in liberal democracies).[8] The question of the balance of power is, therefore, decisive in the construction of a dynamic of participation.

Children and young people, who are the generations most commonly excluded from participatory processes, were prioritised not only by listening to their needs and desires, but also actually involving them in all the project's stages, from conception to construction. Children and young people evaluated very positively what these activities brought them: for example, the celebration of International Play Day.
The original method, strategy and the proposed structure of verbs-actions of the PI (interdialogue, inhabit, activate, recreate) can be replicated in other settings. Circular economy principles were applied for the construction of the structures via use of endogenous resources. Opening up a territory also entails inviting many local entities to contribute to improving the population's well-being.

What Did We Attain with This Way?

The project's direct beneficiaries are around 200 residents of the Emboladoura neighbourhood, including adults and children and young people. However, the PI's collective structures continue to serve different uses and activities, and a larger number of people from the surrounding areas can also benefit from them. Local primary school children from the Gondar parish were also participants in activities such as International Play Day and the musical concert by Quatro e Meia, with an audience of around forty children and six adults.

Thanks to the PI, the community has built structures to address their identified needs: a covered space of 7.5 × 15 metres, capable of accommodating the uses listed in the community diagnosis; and, next to it, the Imaginarium and six flexible wooden structures, a space for study and many other uses. All this is now possible because of the PI (figures 18–19).

The PI also had an impact on creating innovative pedagogic strategies in the field of architecture, both at EAAD.UMinho and SRH University Heidelberg, by proposing exercises to the students within

fig. 18   The Imaginarium. Guimarães, January 13, 2023. © Leszio.

fig. 19   The Palace of Imagination is a community structure with 7.5 × 15 metres of covered space, capable of accommodating the uses listed in the community diagnosis. Guimarães, January 13, 2013. © Leszio.

this ongoing in situ project in the academic year 2020–2021: fifty-five third-year students surveyed and mapped the neighbourhood's social-spatial features, and designed the urban strategies. In the following academic year (2021–2022), Cidália Silva was a visiting professor at the SRH University Heidelberg, where the architecture students had the opportunity to develop their own design proposals for the Palace of Imagination in this neighbourhood by assessing local needs and considering the prior urban analysis by their Portuguese colleagues. It is also important to highlight the outcomes of the PI regarding the FA[S]ER (Making/Being) workshop carried out in situ on January 9–13, 2022, involving 60 EAAD.UMINHO

students in the creation and construction of flexible architectural devices for this neighbourhood (figure 20), thus continuing the project of Palace of Imagination as a work in progress. This activity made a strong impacted on the students, since it was the first time they had the opportunity to work with a "real-world" situation. Having 140 architecture students facing real-world challenges equates to sowing a seed for the blooming of a generation committed to "the needs of territories, communities and individuals that need particular and urgent attention."

fig. 20   Workshop FA[S]ER, January 9–13, 2023. © EAAD.

A Sustainable Way

The key objectives of the PI interconnect four main dimensions of sustainability: ethical, environmental, social, and economical. Within the ethical domain, the project pledges to responsibly meet community needs by participating in the eighteen activities, including the process of creating adaptable collective structures that can be used both inside Fraterna (the promoter of the project and the solidarity institution that supports this population), and outside, in the public space, for numerous uses.

9   United Nations. 1989. "Convention on the Rights of the Child." Treaty Series 1577 (November): 3.

10 Council of Europe, "Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027)," (Brussels, March 2022).

The project formed different partnerships with the local community, stakeholders, and companies such as the textile industries, which are a trademark of this region; these businesses participated in manufacturing components for the structures and provided waste and remnant materials (fabrics, cardboard rolls, etc.) that were reused throughout the project's activities. These partnerships connect the environmental, social, and economic sustainable dimensions.

The environmental dimension is enhanced by reconnecting people with nature, namely by integrating them into the natural realm. These residents can now enjoy a pleasant, bright environment thanks to the placement of the palace's structure facing the River Ave valley with its beautiful agricultural slopes. The project was able to establish a connection between environmental sustainability and public health by bringing together the local family health unit, two doctors, and a local restaurant to promote healthy eating habits on two levels: using locally available ingredients such as homegrown vegetables, and teaching children how to prepare healthy and tasty meals. Regarding the economic dimension, it must be emphasised that promoting the local market allowed residents to sell their own produce and draw in customers from the neighbouring areas, thus helping to mitigate the social stigma that continues to affect this place.

Different challenges are addressed with this project. The first regards citizens' participation in meaningful projects in their own communities, especially children and young people, who are quite often excluded from these opportunities. Their participation constitutes a fundamental right[9] and it is also a priority under the scope of the European Strategy for the Rights of the Child,[10] in addition to being a condition for their recognition as full citizens. Environmental concerns and sustainability are also at the centre of the project, as explained previously, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), namely sustainable cities and communities, and climate action. By working with deprived communities, the aim of the project was to tackle social exclusion and poverty, which fall under the first SDG, gender equality (SDG 5), for example by celebrating Women's Day, involving men and women, girls and boys in preparing healthy meals to take away, and also by promoting a healthy lifestyle and well-being (SDG 3) via sessions with health professionals open to the larger community. Finally, it involved quality of education (SDG 4) through the construction of the wooden structures that provided children with an adapted space both for individual and group study, co-designed and co- made with them.

The right to beauty and aesthetic quality is an ethical commitment to universal inclusion, no matter how deprived people are — ethics and aesthetics hand in hand.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

11 Trevisan et al., "Infância, espaço público e participação," 54.

Is It Possible to Re-Walk This Way?

This is a site-specific, non-conformist project. Still, paradoxically it can be replicated in other places or communities. The ethics adopted is the first principle to be endlessly repeated: to recreate over and over again a utopian project that addresses the needs and potentials of people and place, without any prejudice, through acceptance and empathy without a priori judgments as the starting point for committed change and the construction of a place for freedom and inclusion. The project can be replicated according to four points.

a The methodology is structured in five verbs/actions—"to interdialogue" as an instrument to interconnect all the individuals involved in a project; "to recreate" whatever is needed (the wall, the ceiling, the doors, etc.); "to inhabit" (the food, the play, etc.); "to activate" (the exchange, the environment, the sky, etc.).

b The study box's wooden structure is a prototype that can be manufactured and used in any place by module repetition; the process has demonstrated that this can be used both inside and outside in the public space (for example, for music stands or market benches); it can be appropriated in an infinite number of ways, providing an intimate space for a single child to feel at home in their own body while peacefully reading a book while in a shared and common space, and the perception of the collectiveness of the structure by playing with the modules to create a protected place.

c The Imaginarium is a small triangular architectural piece equipped both with a "spyhole" to look at the sky and expand our sense of infinity and belonging to a much larger universe, and a square window facing the play area.

d Finally, the project's motto, "Imagination" as the capacity for integral communication of each being and of all.

"Finally, the construction of the public space is intended for the entire community. Against a reductionist conception that presents the participation of children as being limited to the construction of spaces, sites, equipment or urban furniture whose use is made exclusively or predominantly by children (especially playgrounds), what is actually at stake is the construction of humanised cities, with streets where there can be autonomy from non-motorized mobility, decent housing neighbourhoods open to conviviality, fruitful and diversified leisure spaces, trees, gardens, parks and green spaces, accessibility to educational and cultural, social and health spaces, accessible and clear information points, in short, material conditions for the effective exercise of the right to the city."[11]

Bruno de Albuquerque F. Lima
Department of Architecture
and Urbanism, Federal University
of Pernambuco (UFPE)

Fernando Diniz Moreira
Department of Architecture
and Urbanism, Federal University
of Pernambuco (UFPE)

The Emergence of Collectives of Architects

—

and the Incorporation of Their Practices in Institutional Projects in Recife Post #OcupeEstelita

Although it did not achieve all the intended objectives, the #OcupeEstelita movement left a significant legacy in Recife, Brazil, including the relatively unnoticed inspiration for young architects to organize themselves into urban collectives. These groups sought to explore new forms of action and new territories through emerging collaborative practices such as tactical urbanism. The impact of these collectives' work led to the integration of their methods and members into municipal institutional projects, such as Projeto Parque Capibaribe (PPC) and Mais Vida nos Morros (MVNM). Through interviews with members of local collectives who later became involved in the mentioned institutional projects, we can assess the motivations, conditions, limitations, and challenges of collaborative practices, as well as the risk of distortion of these emerging practices in addressing the severe infrastructure and urban maintenance deficiencies that characterize Recife.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

1   Erik Swyngedouw, "Insurgent Architects, Radical Cities and the Promise of the Political," in Japhy Wilson, Erik Swyngedouw, ed., *The Post-Political and Its Discontents: Spaces of Depoliticisation, Spectres of Radical Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 169–188.
2   Leslie Sklair, "Social Movements for Global Capitalism: The Transnational Capitalist Class in Action." *Review of International Political Economy,* vol. 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 514–538.
3   Ibid.
4   Ibid.

1 Introduction

The beginning of the twenty-first century witnessed the emergence of protest movements in various parts of the world. These movements identified that many of the local issues were intricately linked to global economic and political circumstances, such as the excessive commodification of daily life, the dominance of the free market and large corporations in local contexts, and the resulting socio-economic disparities generated by neoliberalism. At that time, there was a fervent belief that these movements could inaugurate a new emancipatory stance, based on the principles of democratization and solidarity.[1]

However, after nearly a quarter of this century, we have noticed that in many global contexts, the streets and social media have been divided, if not co-opted, by new insurgents who have shifted the collective agendas in favour of individualism and meritocracy. This article analyses the impact of the first wave of insurgent movements in the city of Recife, Brazil, influencing the formation of groups advocating for the promotion of collective use of public spaces and the democratization of governance through the expansion of participatory decision-making processes.

The proliferation of political voices, characteristic of contemporaneity, results from the transition from a national-international context of capitalism to a transnational/global approach, as proposed by Sklair.[2] The current reality establishes new actors and hegemonies due to the loss of the centrality of the state as the primary decision maker in economic, political, and cultural-ideological spheres. Sklair suggests that the local effects of contemporary globalization increase the pressure on various actors who now share the responsibility for defining this new decision-making arena, including the state in its various political facets, along with capitalist corporations and the new social, cultural, and ideological representations of society.[3]

The construction of this new decision-making hegemony results from momentary convergences of interests among these actors. While capitalist corporations are seen as protagonists in this power dynamic, their current hegemony is based on relatively unstable foundations, which lead them to invest considerable resources, time, and energy in maintaining their influence.

Thus, one of the most important ideological actions of large capital is to persuade the general population that their businesses are intimately associated with the interests of society. It is no coincidence that large corporations carefully package their actions with advertising slogans that invoke values of progress and development. In general, they anchor their strategies in co-option, coercion, and even a certain fatalism. They combine the idea of consumerism with the vision of a city that offers unlimited opportunities, imposing a series of supposedly essential reforms to validate their actions and interests, or even prophesying chaos if their purposes are not achieved.[4]

5   Ibid.
6   Raquel Rolnik, *Guerra dos Lugares*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial, 2019).
7   David Harvey, Rebel Cities: From the right to the city to the urban revolution (New York: Verso, 2012).
8   Swyngedouw, Insurgent Architects.
9   Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings,* trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2012).
10 Naomi Klein, "Reclaiming the Commons," *New Left Review,* 9 (May/June 2001). https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii9/articles/naomi-klein-reclaiming-the-commons
11 David Graeber, The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), 267.

According to Sklair, capitalist hegemony requires constant support, attention, and originality to sustain itself. They mobilize society through the endorsement of "experts," the mobilization of academic sectors, the co-optation of the press through advertising, and, notably in Brazil, through lobbying in the political environment through electoral financing.[5]

For Rolnik, the great paradox of neoliberal economic globalization is to simultaneously weaken and activate social forces of resistance.[6] In opposition to the hegemony of large corporations, resistance movements organize themselves organically, without hierarchy, in networks of people with converging interests, albeit not always harmonious. As David Harvey points out, the protest movements have taken on an urban dimension, influenced by the impact of corporate actions on the deterioration of life in cities. Harvey argues that local struggles should focus on the conditions of daily urban life, subjective formation, and the political consciousness of marginalized groups, seeking to build community spaces to strengthen bonds of solidarity and achieve political and social development on a large scale.[7] Swyngedouw saw in these insurgencies the possibility of a new emancipatory political stance to be developed experimentally, with multiple possibilities for unfolding.[8]

Badiou identifies recurring procedures in insurgent movements, based on the concepts of intensification, contraction, and localization. Intensification refers to the explosion of activities concentrated in an emblematic place that serves to maximize the enthusiasm of the mobilization, encouraging others to join in addressing the issues raised.[9] Contraction operates through the collective union of heterogeneous individuals. As Naomi Klein defines it, a "movement of many movements" or "coalitions of coalitions." This union, in its diversity and in its way of being-in-common, forms a political actor that condenses and materializes into a political category to be considered by traditional governance spheres.[10] Finally, localization produces intensity, unity, and public presence in front of society because political presence requires being located and active in a public space. Localization has the capacity to establish an existence and reveal an exposure for the possible popularization of the cause.

By opposing institutionalized forms of political organization, insurgent movements argue that current governance forums, such as parliament, advisory chambers, and meeting rooms, primarily serve the interests of an elite privileged class. As Graeber clarifies:

> Essentially, the strategy is to create alternative institutions, based on horizontal principles, that have nothing to do with the government, and declare the entire political system to be absolutely corrupt, idiotic, and irrelevant to people's actual lives, a clown show that fails even as a form of entertainment, and try to render politicians a pariah class.[11]

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

12   Swyngedouw, *Insurgent Architects*, 170.

13   The result of successive landfills, the major
     one in the 1940s, the area called Cais José
     Estelita along the Pina River basin is located
     immediately south of the centre of Recife and
     was occupied by port warehouses and railway
     branches. It is located midway to the valued
     southern area of the city, formed by the Pina and
     Boa Viagem neighbourhoods. With the scarcity
     of lots with sea views in the south zone, this area
     began to be seen as being of interest to the real
     estate market.

Although the delegitimization of institutionalized political arenas has proven to be extremely dangerous in the developments of insurgent actions in the early century, the city, the polis, has become the spatial base of insurgent political action. They physically occupied the streets, squares, university campuses, and similar spaces. These movements played a fundamental role in inspiring various movements around the world.

After the characteristic excitement of these insurgent movements subsided, the question that Swyngedouw poses is: "Is there further thought and practice possible after the squares are cleared, the tents broken up, the energies dissipated, and everyday life has resumed its routine practices?"[12]

The #OcupeEstelita movement in Recife, Brazil, responded significantly to this question, as it constituted a relevant example of protest mobilization regarding urban planning and the allocation of strategic areas of the city. It also left numerous legacies, some of which have yet to be properly recognized, such as the encouragement of the formation of urban collectives that managed to influence their work in the public sphere, as will be presented below.

2   The #OcupeEstelita Movement and the Influence on Urban Collectives in Recife

At the beginning of the last decade, Recife found itself embroiled in an intense conflict when a consortium of real estate developers and builders unveiled the real estate project titled "Novo Recife." This project proposed a radical transformation of José Estelita Wharf, envisioning the construction of twelve towers, each up to forty storeys high, exclusively designated for private use, effectively disconnecting the complex from its surroundings.[13]

The intervention area borders the preserved historical centre of Recife and a significant waterfront area (figure 1). These changes raised concerns about the alteration of Recife's landscape (figure 2) and triggered the emergence of an organic movement formed by a diverse group of residents and professionals from various fields, including lawyers, urban planners, architects, artists, filmmakers, academics, and students.

This movement, known as #OcupeEstelita, drew clear inspiration from insurgent movements that emerged in other parts of the world and was concurrent with similar actions in other Brazilian cities, all advocating for increased public participation in shaping the future of their cities, such as *Ocupe Cais Mauá* (Porto Alegre/RS), *Ocupe Parque Augusta* (São Paulo/SP), *Ocupe Cocó* (Fortaleza/CE), and *Ocupe Golfe* (Rio de Janeiro/RJ).

The actions of #OcupeEstelita adapted to the different stages of the approval and implementation process of the Novo Recife project. Initially, the fate of the area was discussed behind closed doors and received minimal media attention. In 2008, the visibility around the future of Cais increased when it was announced that the land, owned by Rede Ferroviária Federal S.A. (RFFFSA), would be auctioned. The consortium that acquired the land provided vague information about their plans for the location but

Neighborhoods of Santo
Antônio and São José
(Recife historic center)

Pina' river basin

Railway yard /
José Estelita Pier

fig. 1   Location of the José Estelita Wharf.
         (Photo Credit: Hans Von Manteuffel).

fig. 2   Historic centre of Recife and José
         Estelita Wharf seen from the Pina Basin
         (Photo: Marcelo Soares_Direitos Urbanos).

emphasized the substantial investment they intended to make, which was celebrated by the municipal government.

The most active public resistance only began in 2012 when the Novo Recife project was unveiled, shocking a segment of society. A protest and festive event held on the boardwalk of the wharf marked the beginning

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process
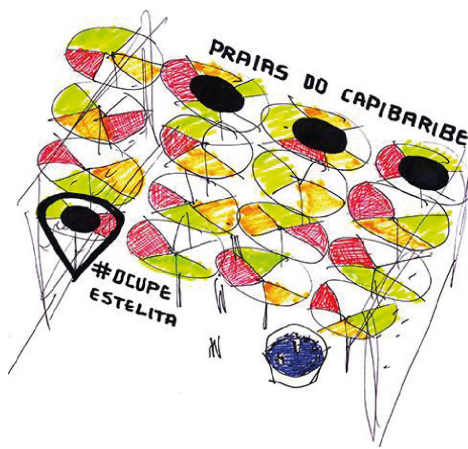
14   Klein, "Reclaiming the Commons."

of the mobilization, which extended, intermittently, until 2019 (figure 3). During this period, cultural events took place and land occupations were organized to prevent the demolition of existing buildings and the commencement of construction. There was also an occupation of sections of the adjacent railway line, where around 600 families without housing established themselves and continue to reside.

The motivations for occupying the wharf were diverse, reflecting the different purposes and expectations of those involved in the #OcupeEstelita movement. In addition to discussions about the real estate development and potential alternative uses for the land, intangible themes like memory, landscape, preservation, urbanity, and the right to the city permeated the debate. This multiplicity of perspectives illustrates the inherent paradox of protest movements, as pointed out by Naomi Klein.[14]

Looking back, we can identify that the #OcupeEstelita movement left a comprehensive legacy. Beyond representing a process of social participation in urban planning, it evolved into a cultural scene centred around urban themes, attracting globally renowned figures and becoming a reference point for social movements across the country. However, it is important to highlight the lingering sense of frustration caused by the defeat in the battle against the approval of the Novo Recife project, particularly among a generation of young people who were coming of age during the wharf discussions.

The debates regarding the fate of José Estelita Wharf serve as an example of the resurgence of urban-focused discussions among Brazilian society in recent years. The need to address specific urban issues over

fig. 3   Record of the participation of the Praias do Capibaribe collective in the first #OcupeEstelita event (Art credit: André Morais/Photo: Marcelo Soares, 2012)

The Emergence of Collectives of Architects

15 Silvia Arango, "Una generación de arquitectos jóvenes latinoamericanos: Autorías múltiples y compromiso social," in Ines Del Piño and Fernando Carrión, ed., *Arquitectura Latinoamericana Contemporánea: identidad, solidaridad y austeridad* (Quito: FLACSO Ecuador—Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, 2021).

16 Leslie Sklair, The Icon Project: Architecture, Cities, and Capitalist Globalization (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 256.

17 Badiou, The Rebirth of History.

18 Carol Pierina Linares Linares, "CO.LECTIVOS ¿Entidad o Condición?: (re) significando a los colectivos como prácticas de la arquitectura actual" (master's thesis, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2018). https://issuu.com/carolpierina/docs/tfm__colectivos/78

the past decades, such as the redemocratization of the 1980s, economic stabilization in the 1990s, and equity concerns in the 2000s, has diverted the country's attention from urban debates that had been taking place in the global north since the 1960s. According to Arango, this increased focus on urban themes in Latin America coincided with the emergence of a generation of young people who, organized in collectives, question their role as social actors and choose to act in the gaps left unfilled by the public and private powers.[15] This generation makes a choice in the face of a dilemma highlighted by Sklair: "In a world dominated by capitalist globalization and framed by consumerism, the architect either plays this game or has to be content to work on the fringes (which some, even Pritzker Prize winners, happily do)."[16]

In the post-Estelita Recife, numerous groups formed by students and young architects emerged. Disenchanted with the limitations of conceiving only alternative realities, they decided to actively engage in transforming the realities they were immersed in. These groups, such as Arquitetura Faz Bem, AtelierVivo, Coletivo Massapê, CAUS—Cooperativa Arquitetura, Urbanismo e Sociedade, Eu quero nadar no Capibaribe, e você?, Oxe, minha cidade é massa, Praias do Capibaribe, Vaastu, and Vendaval Catalisadora de Impacto Social, are characterized by operating in the voids left by both the public and private sectors, representing a new generation of socially engaged urban questioners. The work of some of these groups will be presented below.

3 The Concept of "Collective" and Its Reverberations in Recife

The umbilical relationship that urban collectives have with insurgent movements makes them both follow very similar procedures, as identified by Badiou (intensification, contraction, and localization).[17]

Collectives stand out for their multidisciplinary and horizontal approach, challenging hierarchical structures and not depending on institutional representations such as companies, civil organizations, or social movements. They have a flexible composition with variable members and dedicate their time and effort in a non-monetary and immeasurable manner. They are open to other groups and communities, valuing participatory practices and listening to the individuals, movements, and communities they collaborate with. They operate within a network and are open to new connections based on converging values. In general, they adopt an activist approach, provoking reflections in society and creating tensions within the state by questioning actions and public policies. Their actions are immediate and specific, aiming to address local issues considered urgent by the collective members, filling gaps not addressed by public or private initiatives.[18]

André Duarte and Rodrigo Santos present a definition of urban collectives based on the concepts of community (Jean-Luc Nancy,

19 André Duarte and Rodrigo Ponce Santos, "A cidade como espaço de intervenção dos coletivos: resistência e novas formas de vida urbana," *Ecopolítica*, 4, (2012): 33–54. https://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/ecopolitica/article/view/13059

20 Ibid., 215.

21 Ibid., 221.

Roberto Esposito), singularity (Hannah Arendt), and subjectivation (Michel Foucault).[19] This definition aims to understand the unique characteristics of the political mode of operation of these groups, which differentiate them from traditional forms of institutionalized political action. They argue that the notion of community is not established in advance by historical or pre-existing bonds, nor is it formed by the mere union of isolated individuals. It is the shared experience in instantaneous events that constructs the sense of community, established through a commitment to the other and by "sharing a common non-belonging, a common strangeness and singularity."[20]

Singularity is established when collectives stand out and differentiate themselves from other actors through discourses and practices aimed at addressing an objective reality of the world. Distinction, through the combination of action and discourse, has the capacity to establish new political spaces of discussion with the potential for institutionalization in the future. Subjectivation implies exercises, discourses, and practices by which "a human being becomes a subject" and establishes "forms of resistance to hegemonic powers of normalization and control of conduct in the present."[21]

The combination of these three notions to characterize the phenomenon of urban collectives is summarized in the keywords: common experience, instantaneous events, discourse and practice, and transformation into subject. In a sense, these ideas are present in the accounts of the members of the Recife collectives that will be discussed here when they debate the motivations that led them to develop collaborative work and express the impulses, conditions, and forms of action in carrying out their work.

Many of the architectural collectives in Recife have their origins in universities and consist of undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as teachers or participants in academic extension activities. The reflective environment of Brazilian public universities, especially after the introduction of social quotas, has encouraged both students and teachers to seek an active social presence and to critique the reality around them.

Faced with limited resources for more structured interventions in public spaces, these groups have adopted approaches such as tactical urbanism and placemaking. Tactical urbanism involves local, temporary, agile, and cost-effective interventions aimed at testing solutions for public spaces while inspiring long-term projects. On the other hand, placemaking focuses on enhancing the value of places, considering their specific characteristics and encouraging active community participation in the design and revitalization of these spaces.

However, there are legitimate questions about whether these micro-urbanism actions have the potential to effectively transform the reality of the areas they intervene in, or whether, given the limitations on resources, they can pressure the government to take action.

The Emergence of Collectives of Architects

22 Neil Brenner, "Is 'Tactical Urbanism' An Alternative to Neoliberal Urbanism? Reflections on an exhibition at the MOMA," in Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal, ed., *The Social (Re) Production of Architecture: Politics, Values and Actions in Contemporary Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 113–128.

Despite being considered emerging urbanism actions, tactical actions are not necessarily opposed to institutional production. According to Brenner, the relationship between tactical and institutional actions can manifest in five distinct ways:[22]

- Reinforcement: it fills gaps in governance and their socio-spatial consequences.
- Entrenchment: it internalizes the liberal agenda of reducing the role of public institutions.
- Neutrality: it occurs in interstitial spaces without causing disturbances.
- Contingency: experimentation, under certain conditions, contributes to subverting neoliberal programmes.
- Subversion: it interrupts the development-oriented discourse by incorporating social, democratic, and other intangible demands.

The work of the Coletivo Massapê is a concrete example of these dilemmas. Formed by then architecture students at the Federal University of Pernambuco, the group aimed to apply their academic knowledge to real-life situations. The goal was to complement their professional education by connecting academic theory with tangible changes in everyday spaces.

The group acted by being present in underprivileged areas of the city, seeking to identify demands that could be addressed through micro-urbanism interventions. The choice of these areas was related to the critique of elitist architecture and the realization that institutional interventions often did not fully meet local needs due to a lack of dialogue with the community.

However, due to a lack of training in participatory projects, the group developed its approaches spontaneously, resulting in interventions with varying outcomes. In some situations, the group could not fully engage the local community. However, over time, they understood that these difficulties were common in participatory processes, as each reality has its own dynamics and concerns that may differ from the collective's objectives.

Currently, the group seeks advanced funding for its actions to mitigate the precariousness that marked the beginning of its activities. Through a Caixa Econômica Federal grant, the Coletivo Massapê built a community garden associated with Rioteca, a publicly managed community library in the Santa Luzia neighbourhood of Recife (figure 4). Some years after this intervention, Rioteca's headquarters underwent a requalification process promoted by the MVNM project, with the participation of members of local collectives in an institutional context.

The collective AtelierVivo, in addition to seeking to generate social impact through the revitalization of urban spaces and public facilities, also aims to address gaps in the practical training of young architects. The group originated from the collaboration between an Australian architect, Michael Philips, and local professionals in Recife, with the purpose of

fig. 4 Booklet cover and photographic records of the implantation of the community garden in Santa Luzia, Recife (Coletivo Massapê, 2019).

providing workshops based on an approach they refer to as "Construction Site Pedagogy."

AtelierVivo acknowledges the existence of a disconnection between the solutions conceived during the design process and the actual execution. According to them, this disconnection is influenced by various factors, including social divisions in Brazil, which often place a higher value on intellectual work compared to manual labour. The lack of direct involvement in the construction process often leads to solutions that may not be the most practical to implement. As a result, architectural design is frequently treated solely as a graphic representation, rather than being seen as an intrinsic step in the construction of an object or space.

To address this issue, AtelierVivo conducts workshops in which the group develops a collaborative process of conceiving and executing artefacts and spaces. During these workshops, critical analyses of the process are carried out with the aim of fostering a more active awareness of the relationship between creation and construction. The goal is for this awareness to be reflected in the future work of the architects involved, promoting a more effective integration between the conceptualization and execution of architectural solutions. One of the notable achievements of AtelierVivo was the revitalization of Peace Square (figure 5), located

The Emergence of Collectives of Architects

fig. 5 Requalification of Praça da Paz in the Santo Amaro neighbourhood, Recife, (AtelierVivo, 2018).

23 Amanda Florêncio de Macêdo and André Moraes de Almeida, "O espaço público frente ao urbanismo tático: o caso das Praias do Capibaribe," in *Anais do 1º Congresso Internacional Espaços Públicos*. (Porto Alegre, 2015), 19–22. http://inciti.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/O_espaco_publico_frente_ao_urbanismo_tat.pdf

in the Santo Amaro neighbourhood of Recife. This project was carried out as a university extension initiative by the Catholic University of Pernambuco (UNICAP).

The Praias do Capibaribe group is a collective dedicated to transforming urban space through art and ecocitizenship. Its primary goal is to re-establish the connection between the population and the rivers, as well as their banks, in a city that has historically neglected its water bodies. The collective was formed by merging two groups, " Eu quero nadar no Capibaribe, e você?" and "Vaastu," along with other individuals who share the same environmental concern.[23]

The group used to organize periodic events with the purpose of promoting the appropriation of riverside areas, incorporating them into a cultural programme. The aim of these events was to raise awareness among the population about the importance of rivers and encourage civic participation in building a more sustainable and inclusive city. Appropriating the riverbanks allowed for a deeper connection with territories related to river themes, including riverside communities and fishermen. During these events, artefacts such as inflatable bubbles and floating pools were created, providing participants with a simulated experience of enjoying the river (figure 6).

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

fig. 6   Events of the collective Praias do Capibaribe
(Bernardo Teshima, 2014)

24   Klein, "Reclaiming the Commons."; Harvey,
Rebel Cities.
25   Duarte and Santos, "A cidade como espaço de
intervenção dos coletivos."

The actions of the aforementioned collectives aim to reconcile global agendas with emerging issues in Brazilian society, as discussed by Klein and Harvey.[24] These collectives share common characteristics identified by Duarte and Santos, including shared experience, the creation of spontaneous events, the integration of discourse with practice, and the transformation of individuals into active social subjects. [25]

Based on the interviews conducted, it is possible to identify common motivations among the various collectives consulted. These motivations include reflecting on the role of the architect in a society marked by inequality, the desire to apply the knowledge acquired at the university to make a positive impact on communities, self-perception as social entrepreneurs collaborating with local leaders, criticism of the urban configuration of cities through practical actions, and a focus on the user as a central element in the design process.

To put these motivations into practice, the collectives engage in various actions, such as physically working in disadvantaged areas, getting involved with emerging opportunities and challenges during the process, working in response to unsolicited demands, collaborating with broader networks that share similar interests, mobilizing local stakeholders, adopting a knowledge-sharing-centred working method, creating alternatives

to the complex project-based urbanism model to address urgent issues, and developing intermediate artefacts that facilitate the discussion of relevant issues.

However, the accounts of the collective members also reveal common challenges. This includes the perception that communities have their own dynamics and concerns that do not always align with the collectives' objectives, the difficulty of dealing with disillusioned communities due to unfulfilled historical promises, the challenge of taking on roles and responsibilities that were initially outside their scope to meet the needs of the population, a lack of training to interact with people, working in precarious conditions due to insufficient funding, which highlights the commitment of those involved, the difficulty in accessing resources to implement their actions, and the perception that the value of their work lies in the process itself, something that is not always understood by all funding institutions.

The summary table (figure 7) organizes the challenges faced by the collectives during the development of their work. However, their practices have gained prominence and have been incorporated into institutional projects, as evidenced in the cases of PPC and MVNM, presented below.
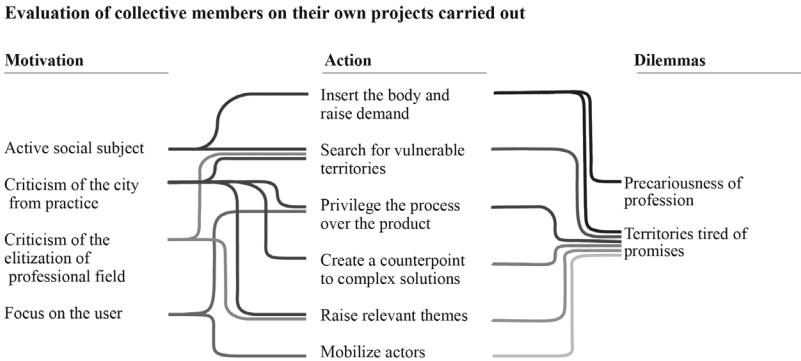
Evaluation of collective members on their own projects carried out

fig. 7   Summary table of the self-assessment by the members of the work carried out as a collective (author)

4   Parque Capibaribe Project (PPC) and Mais Vida nos Morros (MMNV) Embrace Collective Practices

The institutional projects of PPC and MVNM stand out as unique examples of initiatives developed by the municipal government of Recife. These proposals have incorporated innovative approaches to urban activation and prototyping in their efforts to revitalize specific areas of the city, which is relatively uncommon.

26 Circe Maria Gama Monteiro, Luiz Goes Vieira Filho, Roberto Montezuma Carneiro da Cunha, ed., *Parque Capibaribe: A reinvenção do Recife cidade parque* (Recife: Ed. UFPE, 2019).

PPC is the result of an agreement between the Municipality of Recife and INCITI—Research and Innovation for Cities, a multidisciplinary network of researchers coordinated by the Department of Architecture and Urbanism at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE). The primary objective is to create a city plan, with the water bodies that characterize Recife as structuring elements. As an offshoot of this plan, the project aims to establish a linear park along the Capibaribe River, covering a 30 km stretch and encompassing forty-two neighbourhoods in Recife, benefiting approximately 445,000 people.[26]

INCITI aimed to do more than just provide a service; they sought to expand methodological practices by integrating experts in collaborative processes. The presence of groups with experience in participatory urban revitalization allowed INCITI to prototype public furniture and equipment. This approach was designed to assess how the public engaged with these elements, providing guidelines for more enduring interventions in the future.

A concrete case unfolded in the Derby-Capunga neighbourhood, where an extensive process of diagnosis and intervention took place in an area approximately 500 metres from the Maurício de Nassau University, which would be responsible for funding the intervention as part of the mitigation measures for the implementation of its campus. This process culminated in the execution of an International Urban Prototyping Workshop (WIPU) (figure 8).

fig. 8 International Urban Prototyping Workshop (WIPU) carried out by Projeto Parque Capibaribe for an occupation test on the margins of the Derby neighbourhood, Recife (Olívia Leite, 2016)

27 Tullio Ponzi and Carlos Leite, "Urbanismo social com as cores do Recife," *Revista Piauí*, November 26, 2021. https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/urbanismo-social-com-as-cores-do-recife

The expansion of the university campus in a neighbourhood known for its residential and commercial character led to conflicts among residents, existing businesses, and the new population drawn to the university. This had visible impacts on public spaces, which began to be occupied by informal commerce and disorganized parking.

The workshop made it possible to address the needs agreed upon by the users of this area of the city. Additionally, it clearly defined the area of public domain along the riverbank, ensuring access and promoting public use of the Capibaribe. These achievements can be integrated into future interventions with a more lasting character.

The MVNM programme, launched in 2015 by the Executive Secretariat for Urban Innovation of the Municipality of Recife , aims to revitalize public spaces and infrastructure in communities located on the city's hills. The project's purpose is to value the residents' leadership through tactical actions that promote urban conservation and reveal suitable places for community interaction.

Initially, MVNM was conceived as a preventive measure for civil defence against disasters and landslides in high-risk areas, involving the implementation of infrastructure for slope containment and stabilization. This is due to the fact that nearly 70% of Recife's territory consists of hills, which were spontaneously occupied. These preventive measures were complemented by community interventions and engagement, inspired by examples of social urbanism in Colombian cities such as Medellín and Bogotá (figure 9).[27]

fig. 9 Mais Vida Nos Morros interventions in Córrego Do Jenipapo and Vasco da Gama, Recife (Andrea Rêgo Barros, 2018)

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

A comparison between these two projects allows for reflection on the adoption of tactical approaches by a public entity, especially in contexts with significant infrastructure deficiencies. In the case of PPC, urban activation was used as a means to mobilize the population and anticipate future urban redevelopment actions in a specific area. Conversely, in the interventions of MVNM, it appears that the results achieved through tactical approaches were the ultimate goal of the redevelopment. This dilemma is expressed in the concerns of the collective members when they take on the role of institutional agents.

The motivation of the collective members involved in the institutional projects was fuelled by the perception that PPC and MVNM represented an opportunity to participate in institutional projects that aimed to overcome the stigma of public actions driven by top-down decisions that deviate from local needs. Furthermore, they saw the chance to operate within broader networks with greater funding potential, enabling them to influence complex processes and understand the challenges of public authorities in connecting with local realities. With such determination, they had the naive ambition to reform public planning structures.

However, as the work progressed, the members encountered internal obstacles within the public administration and realized the predominance of political opinion over technical decisions, which often silenced the voices of the latter. They understood that public authorities follow their own pace and timing. Nevertheless, they acknowledged the importance of urban redevelopment and maintenance actions, even though these actions only managed to reach a limited portion of daily public attention (see summary in figure 10).

fig. 10 Summary table of self-assessment by collective members as part of institutional projects (author)

5 Discussion and Conclusion

In the past decade, Recife has witnessed the engagement of a young generation in the quest for change in Latin American cities characterized by deficiencies. Through collectives, these young individuals have questioned

the practices of architecture and urban planning, successfully integrating their processes into both public and private institutions.

The examples presented reveal different ways in which the practices of these collectives have been incorporated into institutional projects. We have observed that tactical actions have limited scope, given the specific context in which they are implemented and their experimental nature. Nevertheless, the emerging actions developed by these collectives can play a significant role in revitalizing institutional practices, provided they are executed with care to avoid misinterpretations regarding the role of the state in public services and urban planning.

When comparing the tactical actions of these collectives with institutional projects, it becomes evident that the inclusion of young architects and emerging practices has enabled the public sector to respond more promptly to infrastructure and urban maintenance needs. However, recent disasters, such as the heavy rainfall in the winter of 2022, underscore the need for continuous and sustainable efforts in requalifying underprivileged and vulnerable areas in Recife.

Effective resolution of issues in sensitive areas, such as conservation zones and areas of social interest, requires recognition of the complexity of these challenges. This demands the involvement of qualified multidisciplinary teams and access to appropriate resources. Otherwise, emerging actions, which have the potential to revitalize public action, may be discredited by the population, being seen as electoral or advertising strategies.

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process

Biographies

—

Bruno de Albuquerque F. Lima
Architect-urbanist (UFPE, 1997), currently doctorate candidate in urban development (MDU/UFPE). Professor in the Department of Architecture and Urbanism at the Federal University of Pernambuco (DAU–UFPE). Researcher at the PE Observatory/Recife Branch of the INCT Observatory of Metropolises. Member of the Interdisciplinary Community of Action, Research, and Learning (CIAPA). Additionally, university representative in the Recife City Council (Concidade), a collegiate body responsible for discussing and monitoring public policies related to urban space. Partner in the design firm O Norte – Oficina de Criação.
— ORCID 0000-0001-7909-6372

Cecilie Jessen Hansen
Educated at the University of Copenhagen, cand. scient. anth., master of anthropology, DK. Through her expertise in anthropology and academia, Cecilie can effectively analyse the user experience and identify areas for improvement. Her work involves researching and analysing innovative methods for involving citizens, business owners, associations and public actors in the co-creation and development of cities, destinations, and places. She strives to design and implement these methods to ensure user engagement, quality of life, better access to public services, and satisfaction for all involved.

Cidália F. Silva
Cidália F. Silva is an architect (DARQ, FCTUC, 2000), associate professor at the School of Architecture, Art and Design at the University of Minho, and a researcher at the LAB2PT. She has worked in the area of the city and the territory, with a special focus on issues of time and spatial practices with children. She was the scientific coordinator of the Palace of Imagination project.
— ORCID 0000-0003-1687-2543

Diana Gouveia
Diana Gouveia Amaral is a Portuguese architect and PhD researcher at EAAD, University of Minho (Portugal) and at the Department of Architecture, KU Leuven (Belgium). She is also

a member of the research groups Lab2PT.UM and Urban Projects, Collective Spaces and Local Identities. She has a master's in architecture from EAUM (currently EAAD) (2012) and is involved in projects of different scales and approaches, with a highlight on her involvement in social and participatory projects. Since 2022, she is co-founder of SHARE: bi-monthly meetings of PhD students at EAAD.

— ORCID 0000–0003–1923–6358

Fernando Diniz Moreira

Architect-urbanist (UFPE, 1989) and a historian (UNICAP, 1991), PhD in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania (2004). Currently a postdoctoral fellow at Brown University (2023). Professor in the Department of Architecture and Urbanism at the Federal University of Pernambuco (DAU–UFPE). Researcher at CNPq, and an ad hoc consultant for Capes, CNPq, Fapesp, the Getty Center (USA), and the Arts & Humanities Research Council (UK). He was a visiting professor at Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan (2019), Technical University of Lisbon (2011), and the University of Pennsylvania (2003–2004), ICCROM Fellow (2008), and Samuel H. Kress Foundation scholar (2003–2004). Member of the International Specialists Committee (ISC)/Education+Training of Docomomo International.

— ORCID 0000–0002–1387–4036

Gabriela Trevisan

Gabriela Trevisan has a PhD in child studies with a specialty in sociology of childhood from the University of Minho, Institute of Education, a master's in sociology of childhood and a degree in sociology of organizations from the University of Minho. Currently, she is a researcher at ProChild CoLab, where she coordinates the social participation axis.

— ORCID 0000–0002–0039–931X

Hugo Moline

Hugo Moline co-directs MAPA collaborative spatial practice and teaches architecture at the University of Newcastle. Moline's architectural and urban work has been concerned with enlarging the possibilities for places to be made collectively and he has worked with others on community-led housing and public space projects in Australia, Thailand, Fiji, and the Philippines. Together with artist Heidi Axelsen, he also creates speculative work which critically examines the current way we arrange our world by designing for other ways of relating; to the land, to each other and to the complex networks of human and non-human actors on which we depend.

— ORCID 0000–0002–5594–3079

Inês Leonor Nunes

Inês Leonor Nunes is a PhD candidate at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. Her research, entitled "The Social within the Tropical: The Community Engaged Architecture of Jane Drew and Minnette De Silva" addresses the role of social concerns in the construction of tropical architecture framework and is funded by a grant from the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology. An article which is part of this investigation was awarded the Lifchez-Berkeley Prize (best paper by a junior scholar) at the conference by the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments 2022, in Singapore.

— ORCID 0009–0001–3667–1389

João Cunha Borges

João Cunha Borges holds an MSc in architecture (ISCTE–IUL, 2017) with a dissertation on Aldo Van Eyck and Alison and Peter Smithson. He worked as a researcher in the project SPLACH – Spatial Planning for Change. Currently a PhD reserarcher (FCSH – Universidade Nova de Lisboa/ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa), with a project on social housing, working--class habitats and urban planning. Co-author of the "Atlas of the food system." He has had several papers published in international journals, and participated in the programming of the exhibition "Políticas de Habitação em Lisboa, da Monarquia à Democracia" (2023).

— ORCID 0000–0002–4447–0413

Márcio Moraes Valença

Márcio Moraes Valença was a professor (retired) at the Institute of Public Policies (IPP, 1994–2019) and now he is a professor at the Doctoral Programme of Architecture and Urbanism, the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (PPGAU–UFRN), Brazil. He is also a visiting researcher at the Center of Social Studies, Coimbra University (CES–UC, 2022–2024). He holds a DPhil at the University of Sussex, England. He has spent sabbaticals at The London School of Economics and Social Science (LSE), the Architectural

Association School of Architecture (AA, London), the School of Oriental and Asian Studies (SOAS, London), and The Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY). He has published or edited 17 books; he has published nearly 100 papers and chapters in journals and edited books.

— ORCID 0000-0002-7318-6606

Mariana Carvalho
Mariana Martins de Carvalho is an architect (FAUP, 2005), with a bachelor's degree in fine arts painting (FBAUP, 2011) and a PhD in architecture (PDA–FAUP, 2022). Currently she is a guest professor at the School of Architecture, Art and Design at the University of Minho and a researcher at ProChild CoLAB, a research institution that develops national strategies on child poverty and social exclusion; she is involved in the strategic area of social participation to encourage the involvement of children and adults in co-designing innovative architectural, urban, social, and educational projects. She is particularly interested in social participation, social inclusion, spatial imaginaries, visual representation, heritage and drawing.

— ORCID 0000-0003-0075-5000

Nabil Zacharias Ben Chaabane
Educated at the University of Copenhagen, master of cultural geography, 2007, DK. As a cultural geographer and urban designer, Nabil has acquired extensive knowledge and experience in all phases of urban development projects—right from the early idea phase to the final design and delivery phase. Nabil has experience with projects where existing urban areas are to be regenerated and transformed, and new urban areas and parks are developed and fitted into an existing urban environment.

Nanna Maj Østergaard
Educated at the University of Copenhagen, cand. hort. arch., master of science in landscape architecture, 2016, DK. Nanna is a landscape architect at SLA, where her seven years of experience gives her extensive knowledge of all phases of nature-based parks, urban space and urban development projects — from early concept development to final design. With her ability to reconcile the complex considerations of a project's users and stakeholders with sustainable solutions, Nanna has worked on several of SLA's most innovative and active landscape projects. On an ongoing basis, she has also contributed to the firm's research & development department, SLAB, for example as a developer of the firm's approach to nature and experience landscapes for play, learning, activity, and sports.

Nicolas Rodemann Lehmann
Master's student in social sciences in urban planning, Roskilde University, DK. As a master's student in urban planning and intern at SLA, Nicolas is grounded in academia, allowing him to challenge and contribute theoretically and methodologically to the interdisciplinary work of the studio. Nicolas has experience with problem-orientated work on projects about place development and sustainable development strategies rooted among citizens. He strives to connect academia with practice and develop the geography dimension of SLA's project work.

Rui del Pino Fernandes
Rui del Pino Fernandes holds a master's from ISCTE–IUL, with "Passage or halfway: urban development and housing in Macau after the transfer of sovereignty" (2014), dissertation supervised by Ana Vaz Milheiro, collaborated with Bartolomeu Costa Cabral between 2014 and 2016. He participated in the monography "Bartolomeu Costa Cabral – 18 Works," published by Circo de Ideias. Between 2019 and 2021 he was curator and production assistant at Note – Galeria de Arquitectura. He is developing a PhD project entitled "Virtus in medium est – History and Planning towards an urban-rural future."

— ORCID 0000-0001-6155-4435

Teresa Marat-Mendes
Teresa Marat-Mendes is an associate professor with aggregation in architecture at ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, in the Department of Architecture and Urbanism. She is a senior researcher at DINÂMIA'CET (D'C) where she coordinated the D'C research teams for the projects MEMO – Evolution of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area Metabolism. Lessons towards a Sustainable Urban Future (PTDC/EMS – ENE/2197/2012) and SPLACH Spatial Planning for Change (POCI01145FEDER16431). Her main research areas focus on urban sustainability, urban morphology and urban metabolism.

— ORCID 0000-0002-8502-8250

Architectural Design as a Co-Creation Process