From the Manifest to the Implicit. Effects of Leftist Ideologies in Participatory Architecture[1]

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Abstract

Participatory architecture appeared in the late 60s as a criticism of modernist architecture and urban planning. It was a criticism that did not come from inside the profession (as most other currents and paradigm shifts did) but from the outside, from other disciplines, such as philosophy, art, and sociology. Based on the writings of Michel Foucault, the neo-Marxian Henri Lefebvre and Guy Debord, it challenged the dominant role of the architect as an expert planner and sole individual capable of designing built space. It was a criticism of the power the architect had regarding space, and how the individual user was dominated in this relation. Participation in architecture started therefore as a profoundly ideological practice and, even today, it is still seen as a radical leftist approach to architecture and urban planning. In contrast to the 60s and 70s when participatory architecture was manifestly Neo-Marxian, nowadays these processes are not always so clearly marked ideologically. This article tries to find the different effects of manifest and implicit ideologies in participatory architecture today. Our premise is the fact that participation is first and foremost a collaborative practice between individuals – agents. Like any other form of cooperation, participation must be based on trust but the main motor of cooperation is recognizing the needs and interests of the individuals who are rarely linked to abstract ideals. Manifest ideology, as a set of coherent and comprehensive abstract ideas about political and social action, will create relationships between like-minded individuals, while increasing the social distance from others. Considering that most individuals do not adhere to a specific ideology, manifest ideology in participatory architecture will therefore be an obstacle in creating trust relations. But ideology was and will always be a part of this type of architectural process. So the question is: how can architects or other initiators of participatory architecture reduce the social distance created by ideology?

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Especially before World War II, architects believed that their profession is socially critical and planning in itself was the solution for everything. Modernist architecture and urban planning tried to initiate social transformation through designed spaces, or, as Le Corbusier sums it up in his famous dictum: "Architecture or Revolution? Revolution can be avoided."[2]

From economic problems to social problems, all could be resolved through a specific design. The paradox, however, was that this social transformation they were going to bring about was not based on a specific ideology if we consider ideology as "a coherent and comprehensive set of ideas which explains and evaluates social conditions, helps individuals find their place in society and offers a program for political and social action."[3] This is not to say that there weren't architects which adhered to a specific ideology at the time. Some modernist architects quickly adhered to a political party and helped specific political regimes as Moisei Ginzburg did in the Soviet Union. But even when architects worked for totalitarian regimes, they usually rejected or ignored the issue of ideology or politics in general. As Sudjic argued, there were two models of architects who worked under a totalitarian regime: the Albert Speer model, an activist, strongly involved and accomplice of the power-holders; and the Mies van der Rohe model, for whom architecture was an end in itself, and thus the purposes for which architecture was used was less important as long as the building was built.[4] The CIAM[5] position however did not favor any ideological stand of its members. Again, in the words of Le Corbusier: "architecture is a religion (…) the architect should be idealistic and independent and not worry about politics."[6] So, although modernist architecture tried to change society and the individual through built space for more than 40 years, it did so without a common ideology, and sometimes, without an ideology all together. CIAM was encouraging a belief in a set of abstract commandments about what constitutes sound city development, presented as transcendent rules emerging from Zeitgeist.[7] For modernists, the

[2] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, 1986 (1924)), 286.
[3] Terence Ball and Richard Dagger, *Ideologii politice şi idealul democratic* (Ideals and ideologies) (Iaşi: Polirom, 2000 [1995]), 22.
[4] Deyan Sudjic, *The Edifice Complex. The Architecture of Power* (London: Penguin Books, 2011 [2005])
[5] Congres International d'Architecture Moderne
[6] Le Corbusier at La Sarraz (1945) in Eric Mumford, *The CIAM discourse on Urbanism, 1928 – 1960*, Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2000), 159.
[7] Le Corbusier at La Sarraz, 138-139.

architect had a critical social role because of his power to bring social change through architectural design. This was another reason for which modernism in architecture was criticized.

A Leftist Critique of Modernist Architecture

At first, during the 40s, modernism was criticized for its lack of appeal to the "man on the street"[8] and for ignoring political and cultural factors which determine city form and city life.[9] After World War II and the growing interest of philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists for the ordinary and the everyday, criticism of modernist planning became more radical. Some of the critiques brought to modernist architecture and urban planning were focused on the lack of a specific ideology and on the rejection of the political factor by architects. Others criticized the fact that the architect, as expert planner, is always in a position of domination. Architecture was criticized on ideological bases and it was criticized from outside the profession.

In his influential books, *The Right to the City* and *The Production of Space,* published in 1968 and 1974, Lefebvre argued that: "(Social) space is a (social) product (…) the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action (…) in addition to being a means of production, it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power."[10] He made a difference between space as a means of control and / or domination and space as a tool of action. The first, Lefebvre called representations of space the designed spaces created by experts, planners and architects, which is produced through specific knowledge. This is a dominating space that imposes order through the signs it creates. In contrast, Lefebvre called the spaces of representation the lived in, everyday spaces, the spaces of the citizens, of the users. This is a dominated space which the users always try to modify according to their own specific needs and interests. The difference and the relation between the space of the expert and the space of the user was perhaps best illustrated by Michel de Certeau. De Certeau continued the line of Lefebvre and Foucault, and called the way the expert planner works and the tools he uses as parts of deploying a "strategy". Through a strategic view, the planner, as power-holder through the knowledge he possesses, tries to control the entire space he conceives, determining a specific place for all elements. It is a totalizing view in which humans and non-humans have their specific

[8] J.M . Richards in *Architectural Review* (1943)
[9] Lewis Mumford, 1942, the preface for Josep Lluis Sert's book, *Can our Cities Survive?*
[10] Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris, Anthropos, 1974), 26.

predetermined place and role, thus ensuring order. In opposition to the strategic view of power holders, the dominated individuals develop "tactics", punctual actions, based on occasion and on individual interest. The everyday lives of individuals are therefore a game of creative tactics inside the territory of the power-holders, manipulating their strategies: "The everyday is invented with a thousand ways of poaching".[11]

Based on Lefebvre, Foucault, and later on, Michel de Certeau, the architect's dominating role in the production of space was contested by a part of the architectural profession. There was a call for taking the user's expertise into account. Manifestos, experiments, utopian projects such as "Non-Plan", the 1969 manifesto of Cedric Price, Peter Hall, Paul Barker and Rayner Banham, Yona Friedman's *Utopies Realisables*, Ralph Erskine's *Byker Wall* project or Lucien Kroll's *Maison Medicale* became widely spread. In that period, the urban realm was seen by architects such as Bernard Tschumi not as a place of visual order and aesthetic pleasure based on abstract rules as modernist architects did, but rather as "the arena within which political struggle could be enacted and through which revolutionary change could be effected".[12]

Architects were trying to change society again, but this time founded on a political basis and influenced by a specific ideology. Of course, not all of user participation or do-it-yourself experiments can be considered to be based on a leftist ideology.[13] However, as far as the discussion about participation of the public in the design process is concerned, the initial leftist ideological base is evident. Giancarlo de Carlo, an architect and member of Team 10, one of the main critics of CIAM, stated that: "decisions about where and how they (n.a. activities) should take place are increasingly concentrated in the sphere of economic, bureaucratic and technological power. The role of architecture could be to contribute to the freezing or thawing out of this paradox, according on the side it chooses to take – on the side of the power structure, or on the side of those

[11] Michel De Certeau, *L'invention du quotidian 1.arts de faire* (Paris: Gallimard 1990 [1980]), XXXVI.

[12] In Jonathan Hughes, "After Non-Plan. Retrenchment and Reassertion," in *Non-Plan. Essays on freedom, participation and change in Modern Architecture*, ed. Simon Sadler and Jonathan Hughes (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000), 177.

[13] The "Non-Plan" manifesto consisted of a total rejection of planning and leaving each individual to his own in what concerns building its house and environment. Ben Franks considered this manifesto to correspond more with the New Right ideas of Friedrich Hayek – Ben Franks, "New Right/New Left. An alternative experiment in freedom," *in Non-Plan. Essays on freedom, participation and change*, 32-43.

overwhelmed and excluded by it."[14] In 1969, Sherry Arnstein classified the forms of participation according to the power given to the citizens. The seven steps of the ladder starting with the least power given to the citizens are: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and at the top, citizen control.[15] The favored forms of participation are those in which the user has control in all stages of the architectural process: creating the project brief, design, building, use. Power structures, domination, and exclusion are ingredients of Marxist-based ideologies that infiltrated art and architecture in the late 60s and were the theoretical base for participation in architecture.

Participatory architecture and planning are still tributary to the leftist ideologies which informed them at the beginning. Ever since, architects who embraced this form of practice often adhered to a leftist ideology. The early participation processes in the United Kingdom (community architecture) have been led by architects with a strong ideological base, such as Walter Segal, Ralph Erskine or Colin Ward,[16] which led in time to the simplistic dialectic of inclusive/exclusive; top down / bottom up; authoritarian / democratic in architectural design.[17] Architectural studios and NGOs which organize participatory processes today continue the same line of critical practice, stating that capitalism creates limited, efficient and controlled spaces. In contrast, their participatory actions initiate social change through the creation of spaces of exchange, debate, where political projects can emerge and generate political action.[18] They are contesting the institutionalized participation that most public administrations conduct today and see their actions as tactical, in the way de Certeau understood tactics, contesting the power structures and the way the contemporary city is produced. Today, when public space and activities in public space have gained a more institutionalized and professional character (concerts, meetings, protests, etc. are all organized and conducted under specific rules and regulations), participation has become the exclusive domain of such professional organizations:[19] architecture studios, artist collaboratives, NGOs. Nowadays, they

[14] In Peter Blundell-Jones, Doina Petrescu, Jeremy Till, *Architecture and Participation* (Oxon, New York, Taylor & Francis, 2005), 13.
[15] Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *AIP Journal* 35, 4 (1969): 216 - 224.
[16] Colin Ward is the author of *Housing. An Anarchist Approach*, published in 1976.
[17] Paul Jenkins and Leslie Forsyth, *Architecture, Participation and Society* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 25-40.
[18] Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu, *Acting Space. Transversal Notes, on-the-ground observations and concrete questions for all* (2007), http://urban-matters.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/TEXT_aaa_ACTING-SPACE.pdf.
[19] Sandrine Rui and Agnes Villechaine-Dupont, "Les Associations face a la participation institutionalisee: les resorts d'une adhesion distanciee," *Espace et Societes* 123 (2006): 21-36.

are at the heart of participatory architecture and planning, usually taking the main role.

As we have seen, most of these organizations are informed and tributary to the 60s and 70s leftist critical movement towards planning and architecture. Some of them even act in such a way that they make this ideology manifest: they have a program, a mission which they state clearly, and specific action goals. Participation however involves a multitude of individuals: clients, users, architects, administration, etc. It is safe to assume that not all of these agents share the same interests or vision. Considering that most of the times it is the organizations which initiate and coordinate the entire process, does the explicit manifestation of a leftist ideology affect the participatory process in any way?

Participation, ideology, trust

To answer this question we must see participation as more than a struggle against the usual or institutionalized way of spatial production. First and foremost, participation in architecture and planning is a form of cooperation between different agents. Two or more agents cooperate "when they engage in a joint venture for the outcome of which the action of each are necessary and where a necessary action by at least one of them is not under the immediate control of the other".[20] In the case of participatory architecture, in which the user is involved in all stages of the process, there is a relatively high degree of dependency of one agent upon another. In this form of cooperation, where interdependence is crucial for reaching a result (a built space), trust is essential, at least as assurance that the other will not defect.

When an action is determined by causal laws and is considered normal behavior, trust is not an issue, as the action in itself is unproblematic. But when the action is not part of the unproblematic everyday life of an individual, trust is necessary as the individual is put before the uncertainty of his/her future actions.[21] Participatory architecture or planning is not part of the everyday lives of any individual, therefore it requires trust. Trust is a social mechanism at the base of all and any social interaction, consisting of a strategic decision regarding a certain future, in the situation in which information regarding the other are insufficient. Trust supposes an active individual, an agent, capable of taking decision regarding

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[20] Diego Gambetta, *Trust, Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Oxford, Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1988).
[21] Niklas Luhmann, *Trust and Power* (Chicester, New York: Brisbane, John Wiley and Sons, 1979 [1973]).

his actions and it is influenced by a set of external and structural factors (cultural, educational, institutional, economic, environmental, etc.).

Participation poses a certain number of problems to trust building as the agents involved do not always know each other before, and they might not share the same beliefs. Participation is therefore related to the concept of out-group trust or trust in the "generalized other", in people who are different in different aspects (religion, belief, ideology, nationality, race, etc.). Delhey and Welzel argue that out-group trust or generalized trust, depends, apart from a high in-group trust, on human empowerment and open-access activities.[22] Human empowerment is impossible in conditions of large social distances between individuals, such as conditions of high economic or cultural inequality or in a totalitarian system.[23] Therefore, the goal of participatory architecture, if we define it as a cooperative action based on trust, should be to try to reduce social distances (inherent to all design processes) and to conceive an open-access process. One of the main sources of social distance in architecture is that of knowledge and expertise. In this aspect, participatory architecture eliminates all barriers between constructors, designers and users. The user is (or should be) at the same time designer, builder and manager of its built space. The architect or designer becomes builder and user. However, social distance can be introduced through other types of inequalities related to the process. In certain cases, the manifest expression of ideology, usually leftist or even extreme left, can create social distances or affect accessibility and thus compromise the entire process.

One of the inequalities introduced by initiators and coordinators of participatory processes which act based on a manifest ideology is that between their assumed mission and the desires of the participants. For the organizations the mission is usually abstract and universally valid: social diversity, empowerment of the individual, giving a voice to the marginalized and excluded, etc. It is a political agenda which they try to implement through a space-related process. The GAS group in Cluj Napoca, for example, a militant group for participation of the public in urban planning, describes the goals of their actions as based on three main directions: strengthening the role of ideology in society; debating the relation between society and State; mobilizing the citizens for critical actions.[24] To achieve this goal, they initiate and coordinate actions of protest in public spaces and try to

[22] Jan Delhey and Christian Welzel, "Generalizing Trust: How Out-group Trust grows beyond In-group Trust," *World Values Research* 5, 3 (2012): 46-69.
[23] Christian Bjornskov, "Determinants of General Trust: A Cross-Country Comparison," *Public Choice* 130 (2006): 1-21.
[24] http://www.gas.org.ro/despre/.

initiate participatory processes. The activists of the *Urbanisme et Democratie* association in Paris, work towards the explicit goal of social diversity in the neighborhood and for a critical approach in urban planning issues.[25] They do this by organizing debates in the spaces of the *Plaisance Pernety* neighborhood and trying to involve as many citizens as possible in the decisions related to their own spaces. Although honorable, setting abstract goals to which individuals must rally is a way of creating social distances between coordinating agent and the participants. Abstract goals might not correspond with what the individuals stand for. Most individuals, for whom these organizations assume they are working, are not affiliated to a specific ideology. This is an issue treated extensively by authors such as Francis Fukuyama, Raymond Aron, or Daniel Bell. They have shown that the general public either does not have an ideology, or they share the same ideology – individualistic liberalism. As Lipovetsky argued: "no political ideology is capable of flaring the masses anymore, post-modern society has no idol, no taboo, no glorious image of itself, no mobilizing historical project, we are led by a vacuum, a vacuum which is not, however, nor tragic, not apocalyptic".[26] Ideologies however remain valid but they are characteristic to intellectuals, to elites which are separated from the masses. Activists therefore can be seen as working towards a different goal than that of the participants', which corresponds to their ideology, and not to the one of the citizens. Therefore, in the case of participatory processes where the idea should be the reduction of social distances, acting in the name of an explicit ideology creates social distance through imposing an outside agenda to which most individuals do not adhere.

Also activists can be seen not only as working towards a goal which is different from that of the participants, but also working towards a goal which is not even determined by themselves. When the actions of individuals are based on explicit ideological reasons, this can be seen by other participants as not being personally determined, but as determined by exterior agents, organizations, structures, historical reasons, etc. In other words, the individual-activist might be seen to organize a participatory process for the creation of a public space not because he, by himself, desires to challenge the way space is produced in the present, but because the capitalist system made it so that he cannot act otherwise if he wishes to change the system or the organization to which he adhered and made him act in that specific way. Luhmann argues that one of the prerequisites for

[25] Stephanie Vermeersch, "Liens territoriaux, liens sociaux: le territoire, support ou pretexte?," *Espace et Societes* 126, (2006): 53-68.
[26] Gilles Lipovetsky, *L'ere du vide. Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain* (Paris, Gallimard, 1983), 16.

building trust is the perception that human actions are personally determined and not institutionally and historically determined. Trust therefore depends on the expression of personality and freedom of action of the individual.[27] Acting in the name of a certain ideology might blur the difference between the reason of the individual and that of the organization or the causalities of the social structure, generating mistrust: "solidarity requires the surrender of self among the troops".[28] When the action is driven by ideological reasons, there is usually an abstract enemy against which these organizations fight. This enemy might be: the economic system, capitalism, the State, the local administration, etc. In order to fight against such enemies, the organization requires bigger power. Sennett states that this type of unequal fight is what generates the "fetish of assertion" of some of these militant organizations – the dialogue of the deaf, when the interlocutor is left to admire and agree or counter with the same assertiveness. To acquire greater power, all members of the association must adhere to the same principles and codes, acting with discipline[29] and taking over the main role. Any crack or ambiguity in the message or in the group can lead to a lack of power. Strength is given through solidarity. For being part of the GAS association, for example, you must be a leftist sympathizer as the association is defined as a meeting point for leftist ideologies. In the case of the *Urbanisme et Democratie* association, its members were even seen as "copies of one another, we are all clones (…) who vote to the left of leftists"[30] and as a group of friends quite closed in spite of its declarative goal of integrating as many citizens as possible. Therefore, when organizations which initiate and coordinate participatory processes have a manifest ideology in their actions, there are two possible effects which can affect the entire process. First, participation is transformed into mobilization, and the mission is the transformation of space, neighborhood or the city according to the image of the organization. Second, adherence and participation is limited to the persons who adhere to the ideology of the organization and take their specific place in the hierarchy created. Through this, the organization distances itself from the actual daily lives of the citizens it should represent and becomes more closed, denying general accessibility. "When reform is conducted top-down, what goes missing is equality. Because equality is weakened, solidarity becomes an abstraction."[31] This

[27] Luhmann, *Trust and Power*.
[28] Richard Sennett, *Together. The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 40.
[29] Sennett, *Together*.
[30] Vermeersch, "Liens territoriaux," 60.
[31] Sennett, *Together*, 50.

distance is caught in the study of Rui and Villechaise-Dupont. When the local administration in Bordeaux tries to avoid the consultation and the participation of professional organizations by going directly to the people, this entrance of ordinary citizens in the game of consultation is seen as making the work of associations even more difficult. "These new-comers with their demands considered not to be realistic enough, even egotistical, come and sabotage the efforts of the associations giving the administration serious pledges and seeming to be partners of interest even impossible to circumvent."[32] Therefore, when the image of the city or of the space does not correspond to the image desired by the organization which initiated or tried to coordinate the process, there is the possibility of complete separation between participants and activists.

In his studies of successful examples of social capital building, Robert Putnam stresses the idea that, in order to build trust-based relations, all actions and goals must be based on people's interests and needs: "Community builders need to start with what the participants really care about and not some exterior agenda."[33] He stresses the idea that organizing is not about "pushing an agenda", meetings or extracting information, but about building personal relationships based on very concrete actions. Sennett also argues that although community organizers in the early 1900s wished to engage people who felt paralyzed, the organizer "has to focus on immediate experience rather than dramatizing, say, the evils of capitalism; the big picture is likely to root even more deeply someone's sense that it is hopeless to get involved (…) the organizer must (…) leave people free to interact (…) assist, don't direct."[34] The goals emerge gradually from the interaction of participants, making it easy for individuals to rally to them. Most of the times, these goals are trivial in nature, creating or installing a new lamp-post or clearing some vacant lots in the area in order to install a garden. Their influence is very well localized but, at the same time, easy to appropriate by the participants.

In order to build a successful cooperation between all agents involved, the organizations which initiate and coordinate participatory processes must focus on concrete actions and not on abstract missions. At the same time, participatory architecture was born out of a leftist criticism of modernist architecture and therefore is tightly linked to leftist ideology. How is it possible then to find a compromise between the inherent ideologies locked in participatory processes and the dangers of manifest ideologies present for cooperation? The idea is that

[32] Rui and Villechaine-Dupont, "Les Associations face a la participation," 26.
[33] Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein, *Better Together. Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 283.
[34] Sennett, *Together,* 53.

although actions are done in order to empower disadvantaged groups and individuals, i.e. a more leftist oriented approach, this should be nothing more than a background for action. Civic idealism can be an asset in creating trust-based relations only if it doesn't become the main reason for action. As Doina Petrescu, an architect and researcher of participatory architecture, has shown, there should be no social engineering and no urban expectations in these processes. "Design-action works with the concrete logic of *bricolage* rather than with abstract concepts, with presentation rather than representation."[35] This doesn't mean however that political agenda are forgotten. The political agenda behind these interventions emerges out of the social interactions it creates during the participatory process. Ideology in this case is a background for action, yet it is never manifest nor does it determine a specific agenda or action in the process. Ideology is implicit and, at the same time, invisible.

In a debate which featured four architectural practices dealing with participation in architecture,[36] the issue of how important ideology is and if it should be manifest was explored. *Collectif etc.* tries to make actors involved in the building process, who, in a normal process, have no direct experience of one another, and come together. There is no predetermined goal or image. Their actions are oriented towards making all actors express their own interests and goals and creating an environment in which a common ground can be achieved. For *unda verde*, there is a universal image of the city, pedestrian friendly, bike friendly, generous and well done public spaces, for which they work for. This image of the city is seen as a universal good. So, although not political, it still drives specific actions. However, the actual result is not judged according to their image of the city, but according to the specific needs of individuals: "Ideology should be at the end, somehow, let by". For example, installing benches which turn their back on a riverfront by the local administration does not correspond with the ideal image of the city that *unda verde* has in plan. Still, the result is considered valid, nevertheless, because the citizens use the created public space even though it is not in the intended way. Actual use is more important that intended use. For

[35] Doina Petrescu, "Losing Control, Keeping Desire," in *Architecture and Participation,* ed. Peter Blundell-Jones *et. al.* (Oxon, New York : Taylor and Francis, 2005).

[36] The debate was intitled "Crossing Borders for the Common Good" and was moderated by the author. The participants were Jim Segers (city mine(d), Bruxelles/London), Cristi Borcan (studioBasar, Bucharest), Klaus Birthler (unda verde, Targu Mures), Emmanuelle Guyard and Maxence Bohn (collectif etc., Strasbourg). The debate took place on the 16th of May in Cluj Napoca, during the Architecture Days festival, organized by AStA (the architecture student association).

studioBasar, the issue of ideology is avoided by renouncing the idea of project goal or intended end. The projects they propose are an action, a proposition, which requires no particular response, or rather any response is welcome and considered valid. This does not mean that the architectural studio does not have an ideology, rather that this ideology is not explicit in their projects.

Ideology was regarded as important by *city mine(d)* and even as the motor behind their actions in what concerns built space and participation. For them, decisions regarding built space and the city are taken only by institutions and citizens usually do not have a say in them. Therefore, their actions revolve around giving a voice to the citizens. However, solving universal problems, which are rooted in their ideology, is not what they try to do through their actions. These actions of theirs are an attempt to introducing a disequilibrium in the current state of affairs in a way that stimulates the desire of the citizens themselves to solve these problems. This is not done in a violent, activist, militant fashion, using petitions or protests. Rather, they try to "shuffle out the power structures in a fun way". Instead of directly fighting against this abstract or large enemy, which, as we saw, can have the adverse effect of creating a social distance from the participants, *city mine(d)* tries to address these issues in a fun way, which could be interpreted otherwise if needed. It is a way of avoiding the great conflict through very small interventions, which, if added up, can achieve the same result.

None of the four practices puts an emphasis on the result of their actions. Sometimes, there is no intended result; other times, in case there is an intended result, if not achieved, it is not considered as a failure of the project. Sennett defines this type of acting without the expectation of a clear result as dialogics and it is considered to be a better way of handling extreme differences or conflict without openly engaging it, but also without ignoring it. Dialogics is opposed therefore to dialectics. If dialectics puts two propositions face to face and either makes one prevail over the other or tries to reach a compromise between the two, dialogics is not concerned with the result. Dialectics is embedded in power relations. Therefore, in opposition to big power, the associations should deploy at least an equal amount of power. Dialogics is an unclosed system which is more interested in the process than in the result, with problem finding, rather than problem solving. There is not synthesis, antithesis, thesis but a displacement: "doubt is put on the table; people have to listen harder to one another (…) a discussion which does not revolve itself by finding common ground."[37] Sennett makes a connection between dialogics and the craftsmen's skills of identifying and

[37] Sennett, *Together,* 19.

selecting the most accessible element in a difficult situation. Starting from this small and seemingly unimportant point avoids the frustration-aggression syndrome which leads to a shutdown of cooperation, although it may have the capacity of triggering a larger change.[38] In dialogics, the idea is usually to reconfigure the problem in different terms, ceasing to fight when the problem persists and identifying the most accessible element to start with.

Not tackling the larger issue at first and focusing on small steps in order to achieve a larger goal does not mean a rupture with ideology. In fact, this is the way in which the now called *The Social Left (*as opposed to the Political Left, represented by Marxist organizations – parties and unions) has tried to act from the beginning. The Social Left is best represented by the Rochdale Principles elaborated by the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in 1844, the base on which co-operatives were founded and have been functioning since. These principles refer to equality of employment, democracy in the workplace, profit-sharing, political and religious neutrality, job training tied to employment. American community organizers in the early 20th century like Jane Addams or, later on, Saul Alinsky, were based on roughly the same principles. There is no denying that they are based on a leftist ideology.

Nevertheless, the idea is that through these principles there is no desire of changing the whole world at once and according to their image. The idea is to make the workplace, the immediate environment, more pleasant and fulfilling to work in. Therefore, for architectural studios or other types of associations dealing with participatory processes, focusing on immediate experience and not on larger universal goals is not a way of avoiding the question of ideology. Rather, it is a shift from Marxist ideologies focused on fighting the abstract evils of capitalism with the same amount of power, to Social Left ideologies in which, through small actions and through the changing of the immediate environment, a larger change can occur in time.

Discussion

Participatory architecture is inseparable from the ideology which stood at its foundations. During the 60s and 70s, authors such as Foucault or Lefebvre, sociologists such as Richard Sennett or urban theorists like Sherry Arnstein criticized the architect's dominating role over the user and the way architecture ignores the user and society in general. It was a criticism based explicitly on a neo-

[38] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 221.

Marxist ideology. Architecture, as Giancarlo de Carlo stated, was too important in the daily lives of the individuals to be left to only one person. The expertise of the architect must be challenged and the user must be taken into consideration with his own expertise.

Participation is first and foremost a form of cooperation. Like any form of cooperation, it must be based on trust between all agents involved. Trust depends on the reduction of social distances and on an increased accessibility and direct experience of all agents. In the case of a manifest ideology of the initiating and/or coordinating agent, social distances can be introduced through: the difference between the mission of the organization and that of the participants, considering that most of the individuals do not adhere to a specific ideology; the fact that the action of the members of such organizations can be seen as determined by structural and/or historical reasons and not by the agents themselves; demoralizing the individual because the mission undertaken by the organization can be seen as too abstract and universal, thus creating an enemy which the individual might find too powerful; and the fact that membership in these organizations is limited only to individuals who adhere to the same ideology. Therefore, although participatory architecture is founded on an ideological basis, expressing it manifestly can have an adverse effect on the process.

Some architectural studios and other type of organizations which are involved in participatory architecture processes have had a different take on the process. Instead of concentrating on specific goals and large scale strategies of action, which can change society in general, they focus more on the process rather than on the result, accept all results of their actions as valid, and conceive small scale and immediate solutions and interventions. Their actions do not deny or ignore the question of ideology; rather, they are a different take on ideology, which resembles the 19th century Social Left, represented by the Rochdale Principles, Robert Owen or, later on, by American community organizers. Therefore, even though their actions are still rooted in ideology, focusing more on small scale rather than large scale, on process rather than results, and on having fun rather than organizing protests and serious actions, they have attempted to reconcile ideology with the principles of cooperation and trust-based relations.

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