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a arquitetura da participação de Giancarlo De Carlo revisitada

the architecture of participation of Giancarlo De Carlo revisited

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Abstract

In criticism of the modern project for architecture, Giancarlo de Carlo elaborated a protest text in which he defended the inclusion of users in architectural operations. Contrasting what would be the operation of traditional architecture - detection of a problem, proposition of a solution and later evaluation - De Carlo proposes the architecture of participation, where a new scheme of operation, nonlinear, would reposition the role of the architect as a formulator of hypotheses. This new role of the architect implies a clear dialogic articulation of ideas and practices forged with all involved in the architectural operation resulting in, not a finished final object, but a permanent process of exchanges that should bring the constructed space closer to the yearnings and needs of future users. This essay promotes a re-encounter with De Carlo's text and, based on key ideas extracted from it, confronts him with other authors who also discuss issues about participation and distribution of power in architectural and urban planning operations. Such reflection reinforces the timeliness of De Carlo's writings and the need to keep alive the debate about participation and collaboration - essential ideas for the participatory democracy project that many theorists, practitioners, and activists hang in the contemporary city.

Keywords: Architecture of participation, Giancarlo de Carlo, Representation, Power

1 Introduction

This essay brings reflections on the seminal work of the Italian architect Giancarlo de Carlo, published in 1980 and titled An Architecture of Participation (De Carlo, 2010). From problems that the author found in the architecture of his time, with a strong modernist heritage, he presented a vision of the future for the discipline, where participation should assume a dominant role in the architectural operation. All the work of De

Carlo, who worked on architectural projects, urban planning, as teacher and writer, brings important contributions to the issues of social participation in architectural processes.

De Carlo (1919-2005) lived with intensity the political movements of resistance to the Italian fascism, having participated in the Partigiani War (1943-1945) helping guerrilla groups. In an interview with João Piza (2007), he stated that his anarchist political alignment - and the inspiration he drew from various anarchist writers such as Patrick Geddes, Piotr A. Kropotkin, Lewis Mumford, and others - is at the basis of his interest in issues of freedom and participation in architecture. Contrasting modernist doctrine, he was a member of Team X, a group of young architects who tried to change the course of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), contributing to its dissolution in 1959.

To understand De Carlo's (2010) message, this essay is organized in two moments. First, it brings a summary of the text, highlighting in bold some keywords that, in the following moment, are motto for the complement or confrontation with ideas of authors like Yona Friedman, Josep Maria Montaner, Ana Paula Baltazar, Henri Lefebvre, Sherry Arnstein, David Harvey, Neil Brenner, and others.

In this way, it is enriched the discussion initiated by De Carlo (2010), articulating a collective knowledge, forged in different practices, reflections and historical moments, about the participation in the processes of space production.

2 Social participation in architecture in the vision of Giancarlo de Carlo

The text begins with the author's future vision for architecture. In it, De Carlo (2010) predicts that there will be a growing movement for the insertion of user participation in architectural processes, which will result in the representation of its user and not in the representation of its creator, as the author perceives the architecture of his time. This was measured as good, mediocre or bad, solely for its aesthetic values, represented in publications that cut out the architectural objects of the concrete aspects of daily life.

De Carlo (2010) points out that the dichotomy between architecture and reality has not always existed. Before the existence of specialized books and magazines, architecture was represented in paintings, which did not eliminate the presence of people and uses. But with the emergence of the perspective, which privileged the sense of vision, and bourgeois philosophy, which affirmed the cultural and political dominance of one class over the others, architecture, as well as the arts generally, were conceived under a romantic ideal that culminates, for the author, in the Modern Movement.

Despite a great intellectual expansion, the Modern Movement was also a period of great simplification in the interpretation of human and social behaviour. The modernists treated man as an individual subject and from a strictly functional point of view. Further, De Carlo (2010) points out that the Modern Movement's approach to space production is based on the production of goods. And that the emphasis that the movement gave to the aesthetic aspects of architecture, removed it from the social aspects that were present at the beginning of its intellectual formation.

For De Carlo (2010), the social context could only have been kept in mind if its direct protagonists were also present and active, that is, people, with their conflicts and contradictions, their complexities.

In addition to criticism of modern architecture, the author highlights some of the great impasses of his time: environmental transformations; the *myth of the automobile* that passes the illusion that power is distributed among those who have it when, in fact, is increasingly concentrated in the economic sector and in communication, this one, responsible for the diffusion of myth / ideology; the fragmentation of the city and of social groups, resulting from the city roads; and the production of art and technology *per se*, without developing a critical imagination or the improvement of human material conditions, respectively.

From this context, the author brings his proposal: an architecture of participation, withdrawn to the architects and returned to those who use it. His idea of participation corresponds to a distribution of power among all those involved in a certain structure - in the architectural case, of architects, builders, future users, etc. - or, in the limit, the lack of power, when all have equal involvement in decision-making.

De Carlo (2010) describes the traditional architectural operation as an irreversible three-step process that does not communicate with each other and which generates a finished product: problem, solution, and evaluation. First, in the definition of the problem, the procedures used are, for the author, inaccurate and unsystematic. The aspects that influence cost, technique or aesthetics are preponderant over the wishes of future users. In the second stage, concerning the elaboration of solution, the architectural operation tends to present a single object, with no margin for alternatives - indeed, the success of the presented solution is often measured by the absence of alterations produced. The use has no influence on the object being offered.

Thus, the last stage, of evaluation, De Carlo (2010) considers practically non-existent for two main reasons: first, being considered a piece of art, the architectural object cannot be subjected to any rational comparison; second, the lack of interest in the use of the architectural object precarizes the conditions of analysis between what was proposed and its real capabilities.

In an architecture of participation, the traditional architectural operation should undergo profound changes. With the insertion of the user in the process, the operation would cease to be linear, unidirectional and self-sufficient, incorporating the use in its stages.

At the problem definition stage, the objectives and resources available for the operation would become a topic of discussion with future users to resolve contradictions or openly explore the conflict. Yet the stage of elaboration of the solution would no longer try to present a finished proposal, but, on the contrary, it tries to present hypotheses to be improved by the scrutiny and creativity of the future users. In this perspective, the task of the designer would be to extract solutions from the continuous confrontation with future users. Finally, the assessment would be based on the various ways in which the product is used and the level of satisfaction it offers. Allowing continuous adaptations, the object produced in the participation architecture would succeed when it reached the self-representation of its users.

Given the characteristics of the operation of the architecture of participation, the author admits that its implementation imposes difficulties in relation to the scale and time of confrontation of urban problems. The architectural operation as imagined by De Carlo (2010) is most possible when applied to small social groups, and when they can decide on aspects with short-term implications. Therefore, considering participation as a political principle, it must be prioritized on the technical aspects. In this sense, De Carlo (2010) suggests the decentralization of processes and their total intelligibility: that the large scale be reached by the integration of multiple operations at the microscale, and that the long term be a chain of multiple short-term operations.

Although participation is widely understood as necessary in the various design processes, its implementation has been postponed. Its few examples refer to guerrilla actions, carried out by user groups and by some architects.

De Carlo (2010) therefore argues that such postponement should be discussed and questioned with those directly responsible, points out those responsible and the reasons why they postpone the architecture of participation: political power, because it fears; the municipal administrations, for the burden of conflict it brings; technicians and civil servants, because it disturbs the bureaucracy and demands a more detailed work; the architects themselves, since participation deprives them of the privileges of specialization; and, finally, the academy, since it annuls the traditional teaching and research schemes.

The author closes the text by warning that the list of those responsible for postponing the architecture of participation is in fact greater, but that this initial compilation is enough to open the debate. Recognizing the urgency and timeliness of such ideas and starting from the key words highlighted throughout this essay, the following topics bring the contribution of other authors, expanding the debate provoked by Giancarlo de Carlo (2010).

3 Expanded debate

3.1 Representation

In her study, Ana Paula Baltazar (2009) elucidates that representation in traditional processes of space production implies three questions that reinforce the authority of the project and the designer. The first is the orientation, from the design process, to the delivery of a finished product. There is no room for indeterminations or adaptations. The second is the clear division of labour - intellectual and manual - that representation adds to the process. The third is the definition of quite different stages - design, construction and use - in architectural operations. This is not the case in traditional communities, apart from the capitalist logic, where the idealization, construction and use of spaces take place simultaneously.

Representation in the processes of production of space, such as architectural design, is therefore fundamental for heteronomy in capitalist systems and for extraction of surplus value. To overcome the domination of representation, the author suggests interactivity in virtualized processes of space production, to recover autonomy. Which is a vision aligned with that of De Carlo (2010), who advocated the continuous confrontation between architects and future users.

The architecture of interaction, as we might call Baltazar's (2009) proposal, is one that proposes an open organization with the means for people to identify and solve problems themselves, as opposed to the leading

role of technical and professional knowledge and imposition of static standards, which characterize conventional modes of space production. Therefore, simplified and user-friendly tools are needed, where information and communication technologies (ICTs) play an important role in providing a more informed environment, as well as the technical knowledge of the architect and town planner is essential for interface design, tools and data insertion. The task of the designer, for Baltazar (2009) and for De Carlo (2010), is to present hypotheses that enrich the previous repertoire of future users or collectivities.

Thus, through interactivity and autonomy, not through advanced techniques of representation, the constructed space could, in short, represent who did it and live there.

3.2 Social classes / Political principle

As stated by Josep Maria Montaner and Zaida Muxí (2014), architecture and urbanism express the ways of authority to order and oppress society that forms them. Thus, architecture and urbanism are always political issues.

Henri Lefebvre (2016) emphasized that the city lost its use value and began to be lived in its value of exchange with the beginning of the process of industrialization, which subordinates the city to its merchandise. For the author, it was the dominant class, the owner of the capital, of the means of production, which replaced the work for the product, controlling the productive investments for the city, the subjectivities that permeate social relations, and finally the working class itself.

In reviewing the concept of the right to the city, David Harvey (2014) says that relating capitalism to urbanization is fundamental to understanding the logic of space production. Capitalism and urbanization feedback in a process where the former is always expanding, producing and concentrating geographically and socially its surplus in the city. Thus, urbanization – in which architectural production is included – is a class phenomenon, where some extract and accumulate the production made by others. Reasoning that supports the critique of De Carlo (2010) to the bourgeois class that, throughout history, has dammed to itself the privileges that can, dominating the specialized knowledge, including the one of the architects.

3.3 Simplificação

The studies by Yona Friedman (1975) bring an important critique of the traditional way of working of the architect, who acts as mediator of the wishes of the future user who ends up having little or no final decision-making power. This process is more or less simple when it is a work for specific users, previously known, but becomes more complex when it comes to collective spaces and, more, of the production of the city (Fig. 1).

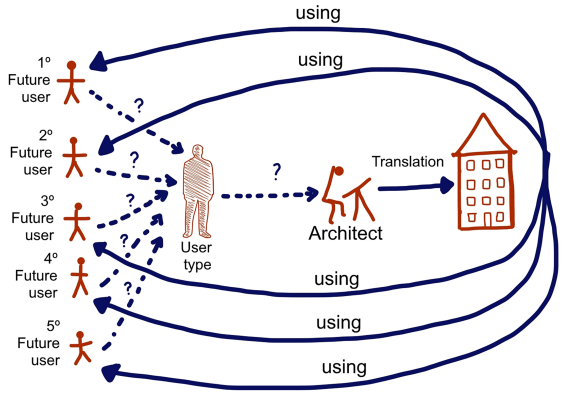

Fig. 1: The user type, by Yona Friedman. Source: By author, adapted from Indisciplinar. Available at:https://goo.gl/AiGYyy>.

In these cases, the traditional architect virtualizes the future users in the figure of a type user. It does this by simplifying it, trying to find an average user who turns out to be unreal. The standard man defined by the Modern Movement and criticized by De Carlo (2010), universal, abstract, devoid of subjectivities and reduced to his most objective needs, no longer corresponds to the complexity of the world and subjects that postmodern thought has built.

Thus, to maintain the reality and autonomy of future users in a space production process, the author suggests that the architect should reposition himself, acting not as a mediator, but in the elaboration of repertoires and the elucidation of consequences, future users able to make the decisions for themselves, in a conscious way. In this sense, Friedman (1975) anticipates a network organization model for design processes, opening them to decentralized control systems, constantly in transformation.

3.4 Technology

It is thought that in the field of architecture and urbanism, the introduction of the computer – especially CAD (computer aided design) software and its alike – represented a technological revolution for the profession. Not only for the design facilities, but for the new design possibilities that the software allows, generating a new architectural lexicon observed in the works of the architect Zaha Hadid and the architect Frank O. Gehry, for example.

However, as pointed out by Baltazar (2009), CAD software is based on the tradition of design established in the Renaissance, tradition also criticized by De Carlo (2010), which ends up reinforcing the production of commodities, overlapping the exchange value over the value in use. This is because CAD technology values authorship, the production of detachable works, the separation and dominance of the intellectual work of architects and, therefore, heteronomy in production.

It will be, then, another type of technological revolution that architecture and urbanism will need to open their processes for the autonomy of collectivities and promote real improvements of the human condition. The networked culture of action that characterizes contemporary society and new ICTs, namely the internet, wireless and mobile technologies, georeferencing, social networks, and others, favour the sharing of ideas and collaboration, in a more democratic and horizontal way, as well as the production, storage and use of large amounts of data. For Baltazar (2009), these are essential tools for the technological turn that architecture needs, depending on the use that architects and urban planners will make of them.

3.5 Power

Sherry R. Arnstein (1969) advocates civic participation as a form of distribution of power among citizens. Following participatory processes in the American context in the 1960s, the author observed three levels of this power distribution: non-participation, symbolic participation and levels of participation where the citizen actually exercises power over the processes (Fig. 2). And she concluded that, in general, the observed participatory processes do not go beyond the steps of the second level.

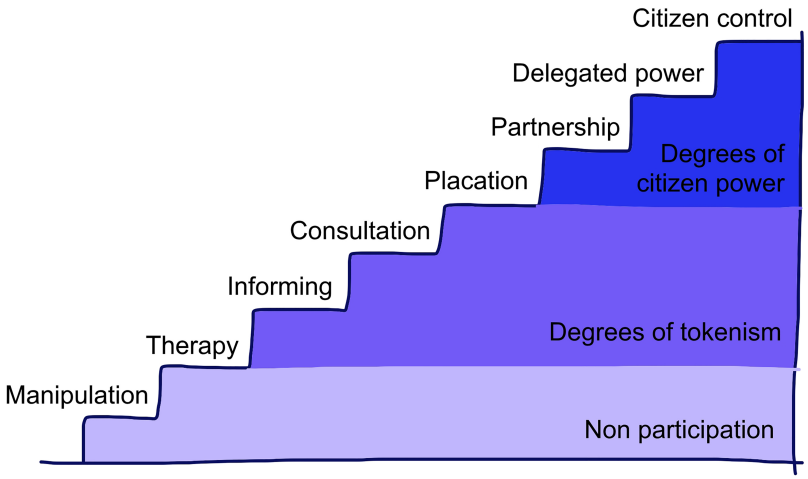

Fig. 2: Ladder of Citizen Participation. Source: By author, adapted from Arnstein (1969, p.217).

Arnstein's categorization (1969) has become an important reference for analysing the effectiveness of participatory processes since then, which has made it possible to verify that artificial participation is not a single American problem, it is in the vast majority of processes carried out in the most varied contexts. As De Carlo (2010) pointed out at the end of his text, it is necessary that politicians, technicians and administrators take part in the commitment that will have to be the participation in the processes they operate, so that the

power they now have for exclusivity is in fact distributed. If it is not so, it will have to be taken by those *without power* today.

3.6 Designer's task

In his critique of urbanism, Lefebvre (2016) questioned the 'system of architects' that made them imagine that they were contributing to the evolution of knowledge when in fact, according to the author, they were only deluded by a system of meanings entrusted to machines, projections and visualizations. In contrast to the economic planning that has guided urbanism to the present day, Lefebvre (2016) warned of the need to create a social planning of the city whose theory, he warned, is still to be done.

Social needs would generate new goods to produce. In this sense, it would be up to science, technicians, architects and urban professionals to help develop new trends, propose new processes, try, learn from mistakes, and record experiences. For Manfredo Tafuri (2008), political action, didactic experimentation and the exchange of static models by dynamic models are demands for resistance to capitalist development. It is necessary to place the role of the technician, the planner, the organizer of the productive activity to the proof of the demands of the class struggle.

3.7 Scale and Time / Guerrilla Actions

The guerrilla actions such as De Carlo (2010) referred to - participatory processes in architecture operations - gained greater ground and visibility from the beginning of the 21st Century. The growing urban injustices, the deepening of a *crisis of urbanism*, together with the diffusion of the internet, information and communication technologies and digital technologies, among other factors, have provoked the emergence of a great diversity of anti-hegemonic practices in architecture and urbanism that can be denominated by urban tactics or tactical urbanism (Farias, 2018).

These are creative, usually informal, temporary, experimental, micro scale, bottom-up and open to collaboration practices - in design, financing, construction, promotion, use. Many of these practitioners are adept at the idea advocated by De Carlo (2010) of combining micro scale and short-term, acupunctured actions to produce transformations in the urban environment.

However, triggered by an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, called *Uneven Growth - Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities*[1], which featured a series of tactical or guerrilla projects and actions, Neil Brenner (2016) warned to the difficulty of combating the difficult urban problems of the contemporary city with practices and projects developed in the micro scale, often temporary. And he suggested that in times of wicked problems and so much criticism of current models for dealing with them, we should think of the combination of methods, practices, and tools.

Brenner's (2016) criticism, after De Carlo's (2010) proposition and various experimentations of micro operations in space and time, cannot be ignored. It clarifies the need to approximate tactical practices - localized, short-term, experimental - with strategic policies if social justice and the fullness of the right to the city are to be achieved. In this perspective, the author highlights the fundamental role of researchers in investigating how, where, under what conditions, methods, consequences, for whom such actions operate their new ways of making the city and living the urban.

Perhaps the technology available today, the emergence and visibility of other ways of being and doing, as well as the experience accumulated over the last decades in varied methods of participation, collaboration and autonomy in the production of constructed spaces are some of the ingredient we have today, but which lacked the pioneering experiments of which De Carlo (2010) was part.

4 Final Notes

The insufficiency of modern architecture and planning in the face of urban problems set many arenas for dispute and discussion of discipline from the second half of the twentieth century. The centralizing, bureaucratic, functionalist, and technocratic character of this world-wide mode of action called into question the intentions of freedom and inclusion that the social project of modern architecture preached, which De Carlo (2010), at the forefront of his time criticized.

At the same time, in the mid-twentieth century, there was a crisis of social democracy in the central countries and an unprecedented urbanization in peripheral countries. The great social and urban injustice, as a result, contributed to reinforce the idea of a participatory democracy where it would be possible for governments to articulate politically the different voices, interests and visions of the world.

In the design disciplines, this idea of democracy triggered proposals and experiences of participatory processes, to include the excluded and to approach the reality of the territories. The view on the political role of architecture in including users in design processes, discussed by De Carlo (2010) and shared with several other authors and practitioners, influenced a whole generation committed to participatory processes in design, planning, construction and management of architectural and urban spaces.

It is important to emphasize in the reflections of De Carlo (2010) the idea that the architect, contrary to what is defended in some lines of thought such as advocacy planning and in many collaborative practices where his technical knowledge is neutralized, should not be as mediator of architectural operations (Piza, 2003). Its important contribution, technical and aesthetic, should serve to enrich the repertoire previously brought by the collectivities, reinforcing the participatory debate in its dialogical character. Collaborating and participating are ways of doing that require the integration of the various world views and various knowledges of those who take part in a given process.

Looking at so many writings and experiences, one can say that, as predicted by De Carlo (2010), there is a growing effort to insert the user in the definition of architecture, or the citizen in the definition of the urban space. This is partly due to new technologies, but mainly, to a great history of urban struggles that call for the right to the city.

This power struggle has been waged in different contexts, resource levels and political positions in various participatory practices around the world. Far from the architecture of participation being the modus operandi today, there is still much to discuss, clarify, experiment, discard and validate. May this important debate never die.

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1 More information about the exhibition in http://uneven-growth.moma.org/.