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A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN: BOTTOM UP PARTICIPATIVE EXPERIENCES

1. FROM THE “RIGHT TO THE CITY” TO THE “RIGHT TO CONFIGURE THE CITY”

The weight of the financial and real estate components in the present crisis, and their impact on millions of people give a renewed importance to the right to housing and the wider right to the city. The paper of architects in planning the city is also changing due to new social relations and the empowerment of citizens, and we have not to forget that scarcity is a great impulse for social and technical innovation, among them architecture. Henry Lefebvre’s “The right to the city” (Lefebvre 1968), can be considered the starting point for the understanding and reconnaissance of the right to urban life, transformed and renewed (Paquot 2012). At the present moment, the idea is growing that to change the life would be necessary to change the city, and the same concept of “right to the city” should be filled with new contents.

The right to the city can be related with the right to freedom, to the individualization of sociability, the right to habitat and to live. The right to the work and to the appropriation, the right for inhabitants to meet, and also the right to reject be quitted from urban space by a social and economic organization moving to segregation and discrimination. It has been developing for almost 40 years, with a renewed interest at the beginning of this century, evolving to the more contemporary “right to configure the city”. Also if many steps have been done with the approval of several charts - being the most relevant the European Charters for the Safeguard of Human Rights in the City (Saint Denis 2000), and the Charter for the Right to the Cities (Porto Alegre 2001) - many steps have also been undone: privatization of water and education, cuts to the construction of social houses and public transportation, but also gentrification are increasing since 1968, hardening in



1. Still frame from the video *Taksim Gezi Park – Interviews with Turkish Demonstrators*.

Source: Robin Rothweiler

periods of scarcity. In this scenario citizens are rebelling and manifesting about these abuses that government and big institutions impulse to follow new liberal models. To cite just few of the most recent claims related with urban issues, we find the Taksim Gezi Park riots in Istanbul, or the manifestations against the construction of an hotel in the Natural Park of Algarrobo, Spain, all showing that the public opinion can have a relevant rule in the transformation of the cities.

In this paper we are not interested in the already widely analysed contemporary city, at the base of the exponentially urban growth of the last century, but in what is left in-between: in the places where contemporary flows - economic, migration and IT - move to reach the cities, the non-places (Augé 1995). The interest is now focused in these satellites hubs, so that everything in-between is not considered at all. These voids are anyway really important, and as they are the spot where this workshop is reflecting, it may be interesting deepening more first from an historical point of view, and then observing contemporary experiences dealing with the threats and opportunities they offer.

2. VOIDS IN THE CITY

Voids are part of the development since the beginning of our civilization, but in the past century we can find the most important experiences, starting from 1921 when Dadaists organized several excursions in Paris's less interesting places. For the first time art rejects historic and artistic places to reconquest urban spaces, considered as an aesthetic performance that should replace the established art system. (Careri 2006). On June the 11th 1954 at the Galerie du Passage in Paris, the opening event of the Lettristes: "66 metagraphies influentielles" exposition took place. The influential maps by Gil J. Wolman and Guy Debord are collages of images and phrases from newspapers, called metagraphies, but Gilles Ivain's one is a map of Paris, with islands, archipelagos and peninsulas, meaning that the other-places are everywhere, in Paris too. The walks realized by Dada are also the origin for the Situationist idea to formalize the perception of urban spaces through influential maps, a further development of the metagraphies. The Situationist International movement, funded by Debord as a split from the Letterists, active since the 1950s, believed that urban space could be crossed like our mind, offering a new invisible reality, and that to be lost in the city was a politic tool to subvert the capitalist system of post-war (Careri 2006).

The act of *derive* (drift) is at the base of the experiences realized by these artists, it accepts fate, but has anyway some rules to follow: especially about what to analyse, hence the importance of psychogeographic maps that help to define the extension to analyse among other different and complex reflexions. In 1957 Debord realized the first ever psychogeographic map: "The Guide psychogéographique de Paris", a folded map to be distributed to tourists, inviting them to get lost. Paris is presented exploded in several pieces, where the historical

fragments are floating in the void, and tourists have to move from one unit (neighbourhood) to the other. Only homogeneous areas, based on psycho-geographical relations, are presented, while the rest of the city is erased. In the same year Debord published another map: “Naked city: Illustration de l’hypothèse des plaques tournantes en psychogéographique” where the distance between different pieces of the city are the result of several soul feelings experimented by the artist. In this map plaques are islands where you can freely move, and arrows are the fragments of all the possible drifts, paths in the void. The city is a psychological landscape built with holes: whole parts are forget or erased to make possible to create infinite new cities (Careri 2006: 72-73). These tools show a naked city, but also make possible to build a joyful discovery of the territory. Circulation is not the result of a functional division of the city, but is now an adventure and a joyful experience.

“A line made by walking” (1967) by the English artist Richard Long is a fundamental piece in contemporary art, related with new relationships with the landscape. The work reflects the essence of absence: the grass walked on shows the absence of the body that walked there and also the absence of the action of walking. Anyway looking at this work the presence of the body or object that generated the line is strong, and its absence gains all its importance. The place outside London where the picture was taken is not important – the same author doesn’t remember exactly where he created the line – but the action reflect a way to transform the landscape, experiencing it and making the walk a new way to comprehend the space around us. The minimalist aesthetic of this work, and the repetitive gesture needed to perform it can also be linked with the interest for the production of a void, or absence, through the behaviour of

depersonalised, repetitive acts (Roelstraete 2010). The artistic movement of “As found” is a critic process that recognize the everyday routine as an artistic expression, and the appropriation of the space through doubt and reflection. In the early seventies Gordon Matta Clark bought several small plots between tall buildings in Manhattan, for \$25–\$75 each, and declared that through the “negative space” a void exists that make possible to observe the built things in a mobile and dynamic way. As part of the Anarchitecture group, he was interested in the idea of metamorphic gaps, and leftover/ambiguous space. “Fake Estates” was a project engaged with the issue of land ownership and the myth of the American dream, but ironically, these “estates” were unusable or inaccessible for development, and so his ability to capitalize on the land, and thus his ownership of them, existed virtually only on paper.

The experience of Stalker in Rome is the continuation of all these previous experiences, as they consider crossing and walking in the abandoned plots and suburban spaces - actual territories or territories of change, according to their own definition - as a creative act. In this way it is possible to participate in the spontaneous urban transformations, whose perception is possible only through our presence in the natural environment, the negative of the built city. The voids are considered as the base where to read the urban form, that otherwise would be experimented as a continuous and homogeneous pattern. A second layer of the researches of this group deals with the relations between time and space that the direct experimentation of these places offer when a change between the everyday and the uncertain happens (Cimadomo 2013).

All the artistic experiences here presented – selected for their innovative perception of the voids existing in the inner city - should

give the understanding that their presence is of great importance in the definition of the urban landscape. These spaces are used in several different ways by their inhabitants, and are the last opportunity to get lost in the city, the last place where you can feel out of control, but also ephemeral, as they move each time that power attempts to modify and to plan them. They also show new ways to experiment the city, as traditional ownership, control and planning can be upset, and new opportunities, related with porous urban spaces can be defined by new empowered actors, the neighbours. The control of voids is easier than the control of other kind of plots, as usually there is no interest by the strong powers on them, but to feel the control over some part of the city, and see the transformations derived, give the neighbours the sensation that change is possible, and that new models for planning the city, where co-participation and new ways of use and management of public spaces are required, are accessible (Cimadomo 2011).

3. CASE STUDIES

Recetas Urbanas, Seville

The Sevillian architecture practice *Recetas Urbanas* (Urban Prescriptions) offers real recipes on how to occupy the public space, without breaking master plan and heritage regulations, but with a creative interpretation of city codes. In the past years several actions were realized in Seville's down town, in order to provoke neighbours and offer them the possibility to replicate on their own these solutions. The relation of the architect with citizens in this case is limited, also if the manual on the web page of the architectural practice offer the possibility to disseminate and spread these experiences, to be realized in most of the cases without the participation of an architect.

Scaffoldings

This experience came out from the difficulties that the Protection Plan of the historic centre of the city of Seville to rise new constructions and refurbishments due to the extensive protection grade given to the buildings included in this area, and offer a liveable space in down-town Seville, without prejudicing existing cultural heritage. The solution consists of a temporary scaffolding installed next to a centric building catalogued with a very high protection, that had no relation with the architect, for instance a regional government property.

The permit was given to situate a scaffolding on the street, for a duration of three months to paint the façade of the building, necessary for the presence of graffiti, made previously by the same architect to justify the application. At this moment no requirements existed to justify the ownership of the building, aspect modified in the following reforms of the code. Installing this scaffolding was seen as a cheap and reversible solution for a temporary increasing of the houses' area, a spontaneous growing generated by the neighbours and not by the real estate system. This solution is obviously temporal, as the same technical solution is considered ephemeral, something that frightened architects until the contemporary situation of scarcity and uncertainty. The same occupation of the public street shows that there is no interest in consolidating the increasing of volume, or to generate new private property, but only to respond to punctual needs that a family could experiment. In fact, also if in this experience a foreign building was used to extreme its impact, it can easily be considered as an extension of somebody's house, to host some friends, some family or for other uses that contemporary live could occasionally demand.



2. Scaffolding project built in the historic district of Seville.

Source: Santiago Cirugeda



3. Kuvas s.c. Self-managed Playground in a square of the historic district of Seville (2001).

Source: Santiago Cirugeda

Kuvas S.C.

It is one of the earliest projects of *Recetas Urbanas*, that investigates the occupation of public streets according with the construction code of the city of Seville, in order to offer new facilities in a dense neighbourhood where, until the beginning of this Century, didn't exist many facilities for their inhabitants. A permit to occupy the street (preserving the flow of urban traffic) with a container for the removal of construction debris of a supposed reform was required, but suddenly it was transformed in the first self-managed playground of the city. Soon some citizen filed the "strange" use of the container, but no legal infringements were found by the police or the building committee of the city. It was then used also for several different uses, from an info-point for recollecting citizens suggestions on the transformation of the neighbourhood, to a flamenco scenario, creating and recollecting new ideas that couldn't be predictable with traditional design tools.

When the container was removed, it was offered for free to other citizens that could be interested in creating new public activities near their houses, but it hadn't the results expected, demonstrating that citizens were still not used to participate actively in the construction of their surroundings.

Puzzle House

The idea at the base of this project is to use abandoned plot inside the historic city, reaching an agreement between the owner and the new dwellers, who limit their permanence in the same plot for a maximum of two years, before moving to another plot, dismantling their puzzle house, a prefabricated solution that can be easily built an infinite number of times. It is a nomadic and temporal way of life, that take advantage of the voids of the city for a limited period of time. This kind of houses can

be assimilated to a provisional and dismantling construction – it is important to point out the difference between dismantling and demolishing - for temporal use established by the construction code, so that obtaining the occupation license would be easy, and do not require the fulfilment of all the regulations related with new buildings. Apart of the possibilities to modify the historical city, only for short periods of time and without onerous efforts, when the owner decide to develop his plot, it can be easily given back, moving the puzzle house to a nearby location.

The main issue of this experience is the agreement and confidence between neighbours, and the possibility to have several new (temporary) uses inside the dense historic city, for personal use or to be shared between a collective, like in the case of the pilot experience realized by *Recetas Urbanas*. For the first time the project showed that it is much better to have a meeting point for the neighbourhood, or any different use that could arise, than keep a plot abandoned and without use.

Esto no es un solar, Saragossa

The experience of *Esto no es un solar* (This is not a plot), first in Saragossa and later in many different European cities, can be seen as a continuation of the Puzzle House project, looking for plots to change their state - at least for some months - and be transformed into urban spaces that neighbours can use and enjoy. In this city in the North of Spain, it started with the need to clean plots abandoned, where their owners didn't follow the rules about keeping clean and safe their properties. The municipality had to act subsidiary, and then reclaim the costs occurred to the same owners, but it happened that some of these plots were property of the same Institutions, making easier to accept the realization of temporary uses, especially thinking as in

this moment the National, Regional and local governments didn't have the economic power to start new facilities, delayed several years in time. With the financial help of the European Union - around 1 mill. Euros - 16 plots have been refurbished to host squares, gardens, playgrounds and gardens that serve the neighbourhoods. Being a public investment, some conditions are required, starting from the period of lease, that should be superior to six months, and a rigorous process of analysis and participatory process previous to the definition of the uses. [Figure 4: Esto no es un solar, plot destined to social activities, Saragossa. Source: Grávalos & Di Monte arquitectos.] [Figure 5: Beit Arabiya Peace Centre after the last demolition. Source: ICAHD.]



4. Esto no es un solar, plot destined to social activities, Saragossa.

Source: Grávalos & Di Monte arquitectos

Israel Committee Against Houses Demolition (ICAHD), West Bank

The state of Israel implements a policy for the demolition of Arab houses lacking the required official construction permit - that is very difficult to obtain due to the arbitrary limitations arose by the Israeli Government - and at

the same time promotes new settlements for the Jewish in the same territory and under the same laws. It is definitely a political decision with the scope to enclose Arabs in a constrained territory, depressed and overcrowded (Cimadomo 2013). In the most cases this policy pushes Palestinian families to build their houses without the required permit, facing the risk to see them demolished. It is anyway the only solution to live in very narrow spaces for the growing families. The demolishing order is an arbitrary process - it can also never be notified - and also if notified many years can pass before it is effectively carried out. But when Israeli brigades arrive, they concede only 15 minutes to bring out all the family goods, before starting the demolition. In this frame was created in 1997 the ICAHD, a peaceful organization with the aim to fight against this injustice, especially in the Arab culture, where an house represent the dignity of their owners and a safety place for their family. The demolition of a house has several effects on their owners, according with Meire Margalit, from the Jerusalem municipality: for men is a deep humiliation, for women is the destruction of their status of wives and mothers built around the concept of dwelling, and for kids is the origin of traumas and suffering (Meade 2011).

The procedure established by ICAHD take the form of an active resistance, blocking the work of bulldozers, mobilising diplomats and reporters against these actions, and also helping and financing reconstruction of houses when it is not possible to stop their demolition (Halper 2009).

The experience of Salim Shawamreh's family, who during the nineties bought a plot near the



5. Beit Arabiya Peace Centre after the last demolition.

Source: ICAHD

city of Anata to build their own house is worth to be presented to understand the implications that these orders have over the Arabs and the activities of ICAHD. After two applications for a construction permit, costing more than ten thousand dollars, the permit was denied, the first time for being an agricultural land, and secondly for the excessive slope of the plot. The same authority suggested to present a third application, that was also denied for the lack of a signature by the previous owner of the plot. In 1994 the necessities of this family, a couple with four children, pushed them to start building the new house, without the required permit, but soon received the demolishing order, that will be accomplished only four years later. Thanks to the help offered by ICAHD, as an act of resistance against this abuse, the house is rebuilt, but is demolished three more times, until it is destined to host the headquarters of a Peace Center, shared by Israelis and Arabs to investigate new solutions to reach peace – the Beit Arabiya Center – that is also demolished, for the sixth time in November 2012.

The demolition of houses is part of a wider policy that attempts to expel Palestinians from their land, against all established International Law and that has been compared with similar processes held in South Africa or Kosovo, with ethnic cleansing means (Halper 2009). Fear that a house can be demolished is considered as a deterrent to the construction of new buildings, even if the lapse of time until the demolition can push many families to risk, and gain some years also if it has to be shared with a permanent state of fear and uncertainty. Each summer ICAHD organizes an International Volunteers Camp to rebuild houses demolished in the Anata's area, and has been used to rebuild the same Beit Arabiya Center five more times in the last twelve years. It is a declaration of friendship and dignity between the international participants and

Arabs and Israelis, that work together to (re) build a symbol of peace. It brings closer different cultures, answering in this way to the repression acts held by the Government of Israel with cooperation will. ICAHD's actions attempt with active resistance and small scale activities to dismantle discrimination against the Arab minority. Also if the houses rebuilt are really only a small portion of the number of buildings demolished every year, what is considered more important is the awareness of this activity for the participants and the multiplier effect into the international community.

Decolonizing Architecture, West Bank

The architectural studio funded by Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal and Eyal Wiezman in Bethlehem in 2007 has among its aims to research on the spatial realities of the Israel – Palestinian conflict in a proactive way. It looks for a political action through the transformation of space, working with the concept of decolonization meant as a process of reuse and deactivation of the infrastructures built with control and defence aims by the occupiers (Hilal et al. 2010). Against the risk that is inherent to keep the same function by the new dominant forces, they consider the act to profane as an opportunity to offer new uses that will delete the historic footsteps of the original ones and will also offer shared uses where the previous establishment impeded division and fragmentation (Agamben 2010). They finally don't look directly for the end of the conflict, but to give a new sense to the term 'decolonization', in order to transform it in a vehicle of change in the deactivation of the previous systems, through the model of a reference handbook, offering several actions detailed at an architectural scale. It is anyway to be considered as an anti-manual, if compared with the one published by the Israel's Housing Minister in 1984, as it follows the same

logic but reversing and using several adjectives that undermine its sense.

One of the projects realized by Decolonizing Architecture that uses the concepts of Ungrounding and Un-homing is related with the military base of Oush Grab (the crow's nest), built by the English army in the Thirties, next to the city of Beit Sahour, in the south region of Bethlehem. It was later used by the Jordan army between 1948 and 1967 and later on by the Israel army until they retired from the region in 2006. Afterwards it was used alternatively and sporadically by Palestinians, which in 2007 inaugurated a park and several public utilities, and by Jews, that every weekend occupied this place, celebrating meetings and hoisting their national flag, protected by their Army against the protests of the Arab citizens. There is an alternate occupation of this space, through graffiti and superimposed architectural transformations, among which blocking off the doors of the buildings, to limit the possibilities of their occupation by Israel colons. This is the point from where Decolonizing Architecture, together with the Palestine Wildlife Association and several others NGOs started a project giving great relevance to the place where the birds migrations use to rest in their way from Lebanon to Egypt, and origins the proposal for a park and nature observatory, as a profaning experience to give new uses to this military base. Controlled demolitions are proposed, to make the buildings less liveable for humans, but not for birds. In this way the modification of topography is a key-aspect of the design, remembering the demolitions of 'illegal' houses carried on by Israel¹, and with the problems generated by the demolitions of Israeli's settlements in Gaza previous to its return to the Palestinian National Authority, when a large amount of construction wastes was very difficult to recycle. The architects also proposed to

assume the transformations already happened, as wastes from the construction processes of the nearby Beit Sahour were gathered in the base, that served also to extract earth necessary for new buildings. The selected demolitions served also to bury the buildings remained, reorganizing the relations between the same base and the landscape (Hilal et al. 2010).

Teddy Cruz, San Diego – Tijuana Border

Teddy Cruz is an architect established in San Diego, whose research is centred on borderlands as places where new opportunities to share resources and infrastructures appear, taking advantage of border urban realities. The critical work he develops feed also his practice, that will be analysed in this chapter for the repercussions on the problems generated in borderland areas.

Tijuana: tactics of invasion

The most radical ideas in urban development are being generated in scarcity situations, where new institutional protocols for unorthodox collaborations face with complexities of everyday life (Cruz 2011). The projects realized in Tijuana can be defined in this same context, where new informal settlements occupy the territory with a common pattern, managed by community activists that organize invasions on the territories identified. Being public or private properties, usually on heavy slopes not suitable for formal developments, they are occupied at sunrise when new colons bring recycled materials – usually imported from San Diego – to mark the footsteps of their new dwellings on the land. With the passing of time and with community help, these houses grow adapting new materials to the original structures, improving and substituting the construction elements. Once the shanty-town is consolidated, the

neighbours start to require basic services, and infrastructures follow the occupation of the territory, reversing the common practice of urbanism.

The project developed by Teddy Cruz aims at the collaboration with the maquiladora industry, where the majority of invaders work, to give back some of the benefits these companies earn by the facilities offered to them, sharing their own technical and productive capacity. The architect designed a metallic frame, that should be produced in the same assembly plants and that can be used as the main structural element where to adapt the different recycled building materials. It can be described as an inverted U, made by aluminium tubular profiles that define rectangular frames, one to support the roof or the first floor soil, and the second to hold a fibre glass deposit to offer a reserve of potable water for each house. The third side is defined by two metal bars to be plunged in the soil, improving the mechanical resistance of the whole system. The design can be seen as an acupuncture intervention, according with the same definition given by Cruz, that offers colons a light prefabricated element to improve the whole process of building their houses, also from the safety point of view. This structural frame comes with an handbook that shows different ways to optimize its use with pallets and tyres, improving their features and comfort. It is in last instance, to give citizens something tangible, something really important to improve their life and that they cannot obtain by themselves, with the scarce resources they can reach (Friedman 2009).

Contamination of Zoning

On the other side of the border where zoning is rigid but is also experimenting informal transformations due to immigrants that adapt the places where they live to their own way of living, Teddy Cruz is experimenting with

simple transgressive strategies to defy established urbanism codes. The project developed with the NGO Casa Familiar in El Pueblito (San Ysidro, San Diego), on the American border starts from the reconnaissance of the transgression tendencies that informality create in certain communities, to force rigid rules to adapt to their cultural idiosyncrasy (Cruz 2006). Questions about density and the mean of housing in these realities are at the base of small scale interventions, based on collaboration among neighbours and public establishments that can generate a fertile base for a chain of new projects.

The participants defined a planning tool known as Affordable Housing Overlay Zone (AHOZ), approved by the municipality in 2005, where a higher density is permitted, together with mixed uses very different to the common American standards. The process can be resumed in the following points (Cruz).

1. The NGO becomes an urban Think Tank. It would manage an initial research project to identify and document properties on which illegal construction has taken place in the last decades, as small extended families share resources in building non-conforming additions. These stealth companion units usually are located in the back of a parcel flanking an alley.
2. The municipality would allow a small overlay zone, within which these illegal and fragile units could be legalized, allowing their replacement by new ones without penalizing the property owners.
3. The non-profit sector, with the support of alternative funding would generate the design of a series of small, ready made housing additions that can be combined in a variety of scenarios and assembled by human resourcefulness within the community.

4. The non-profit sector would act as mediator between city and financial agencies (banking), managing and facilitating construction permitting and loan processes.
 5. A property owner would select a particular combination of dwelling and the non-profit would assist in expediting its permitting process. The municipality would pre-authorize the construction documents for these new dwellings, allowing the Non-Profit to facilitate the end of the process and managing the actual construction permit.
 6. The property owner promises to participate in the construction of the unit, therefore allowing sweat equity-hours of labour – to become equity in the development proforma. This introduces the notion of “Barter Housing and Services”. Property owners join forces to produce alternative services and programming. Two house-holds get together to produce a micro-nursery or a free-rent studio is given to a gardener as exchange to maintain the premises, a dweller participates in a pedagogical project organized by Casa Familiar for the neighbourhood’s children, generating a “Time Bank” for the dweller who in turn can invest it or exchange it for other services, etc.
 7. How to make the units affordable? The Non-Profit would manage a series of micro-credits. This is not only achieved by inserting the notions of “bartering housing”, “time banking”, sweat equity, neighbourhood collaboration and exchange, but in a more “official” economic process, it is achieved by breaking the loan structure allocated to large affordable housing projects – out of tax credits and other subsidies – into small pieces that can be distributed throughout the community:
 8. The construction of housing units at the back of parcels would support the activation of a network of alleys into a circuit of pedestrian and landscape corridors.
 9. Some of the amenities included in these community housing projects would include small, social service infrastructures as support systems for non-conforming community uses, such as informal public markets and gardens.
 10. The guidelines proposed by the AHOZ could be distilled into a series of new relationships, so that private developers who want to benefit from the higher densities proposed by this overlay zone would have to comply with the social and public programs that accompany these developments.
- 123 of the total 153 plots interested by this zone are apt for increasing their density according with the AHOZ, while the survey recognized that illegal constructions occupied up to 50% of the total plots, showing the need to make policy and analysis on the built tissue of the city, and to update the codes as they do not respond to the real needs of the neighbourhoods.
- Another project inscribed into the 2006-2011 San Ysidro plan is the “Living Rooms at the Border”, the rehabilitation of an old church to improve and create new dynamics for the revitalization and coexistence of the neighbourhood, through the construction of fifteen houses for rent. It is a good example to understand the theory behind the AHOZ plan, as it includes several complementary solutions to answer different and changing needs of the neighbourhood. Open facilities, like collective kitchens and urban furnitures are built to let the neighbours to organize several kind of activities and meetings. Four different typologies are developed, for young single mothers (type 1), duplex for artists (type 2), two independent flats that share collective functions for large families with grandfathers (type 3) and small flats for people collaborating with the neighbourhood (type 4). These houses

are not rent only for money, but are also offered in change of the participation in the neighbourhood management and social programs for the community. The aim of the project is to look for changes in urban politics that will benefit all the neighbours, taking advantage of unused densities and moving from the “number of houses for hectare” to the “number of social interchanges for hectare”, which let the neighbours to define their surroundings according with their particular needs, and reach their right to live the city (Anderson 2011).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Giancarlo de Carlo said in the sixties that “Architecture is too important to leave it alone to architects”, proposing a participative design model where horizontal dialogue let the reduction of fails thanks to a levelled management of power. In the same years Yona Friedman was developing manuals for selfplanning, due to the difficulty of architects and clients to understand each other. These models didn’t consolidate, being only experiences that were looked at as innovative, but showed the necessity to dialogue with the neighbours, as a relevant social act. While in many other areas the Do It Yourself (DIY) model developed during the crisis period, our field has experimented the much more richness Do It With Others (DIWO). The case studies here presented show the possibility to create new models of urban transformation that respond to the needs of citizens, but also to the new social responsibility required in the new productive model of our society. They also reflect a new way to plan the city, where co-participation and new ways of use and management of public spaces are possible. It is also the reflection of different ways to act: informality, cohesion, subversion, contamination, hybrid responses, transgression and appropriation are revalued, and not considered as negative.

If we consider the voids existing in our cities as opportunities to develop in times of scarcity, it can be easy to impulse a change. We have always to remember that architecture has to satisfy the citizen and to be useful, something that during the last years moved to satisfy the real estate companies, leaving the people as passive actors. As many of these experiences included in their projects manuals of use for the citizens, they also show that the change is in the hands of the neighbours, and can be accomplished without the strictly condescendence of powers. The right to configure the city, presented at the beginning of this paper, is now easier to accomplish than ever, matured after many claims of citizens related with basic rights. Architects have at the same time recognized these opportunities, and while during the bubble expansion period followed the orders of these strong powers, they have realized that joining the neighbours at the same level in participatory activities offers great new possibilities.

What is again up to date are few questions that Yona Friedman formulated in the Sixties, that these experiences answers alone, also if it is important to remark and remember, in order to have always present the risks that forgetting them can generate in our built environment. They also serve as open questions to close this work, in order to make everybody to reflect on the possibilities that architecture offers when correctly developed (Friedman 2009).

Who has the right to decide in architectural affairs?

Architecture has to modify things to adapt them to men, or has to transform the way men use these things?

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1. See the ICAHD experience in this same chapter.

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