

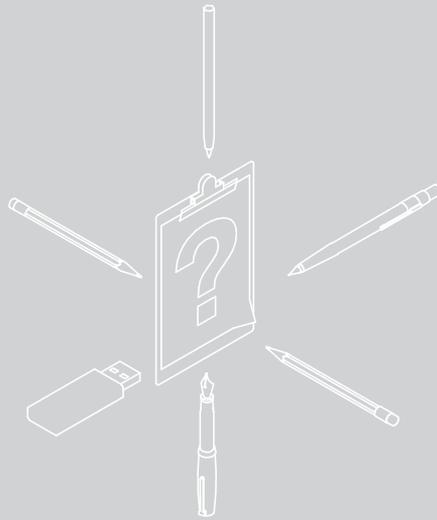
**RADICAL INCLUSIVITY**

ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

**KRZYSZTOF NAWRATEK**

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# Bio

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## 1. A Question of Infinite

### Exclusivity

Architecture (a building) is constructed out of a process framed by certain limitations - a building has a certain location, certain limits, certain function (or functions), certain set of users, [certain budget], it therefore by its nature separates [human and non human actors]. Does this mean, that idea of really inclusive architecture is absurd? Does it mean that architecture is and will be always exclusive?

The building, as any construction intended to be inhabited, regardless of function, adds the definition of the object formally designed/built by plans – floor, walls and roof – constituted as protection elements against sun, wind, rain, animals and intruders.

A focus adjustment is what we start here.

Considering the Lefebvrian concept of architecture – the transformation of the space by human actors – ordinary people, not only architects, raise buildings (the so-called autoconstruction universe). Furthermore, from childhood, experiencing a building is a practical recognition of the social space. Practice as what is decisive for the identity of a user or a group, to the extent that this identity allows you to take your place and to act in the network of social relations, as defined by Michel De Certeau. From this perspective, it is impossible to deny the inclusion of a building in the social and political field where human actor feels recognized and acts.

So how to look at a building? This concern becomes relevant when we realize that the use of words (or concepts) forces us to rethink what they express, such as the 'building'. I understand that this can be seen as: (1) work, the result of the parameters of architectural aesthetics aligned with engineering technology, which remains in space and time as a physical record (resulted from architecture and engineering, as knowledge fields), or (2) medium, built by the multiplicities of those who draw/do it and also experience it, all belonging to the world of techniques, representations and practices (resulted from the human action). Accordingly, the building is the medium where social practices happen.

The building contains per se dimensions beyond utilitas, firmitas e venustas; social, environmental, juridical, political, economic and cultural conditions feed individual and collective subjectivities – worldviews, experiences, perceptions, trajectories, purposes, interpretations, appreciations and impressions of human actors – which enable their practices along time. Such understanding embraces thus the perception of the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos who states that the object exists only if the social actor gives it some sense.

We also infer the articulation of human and non-human, natural and artificial actors, thus proposed by Bruno Latour, as an effective condition to raise building as a medium where social practices happen. If so, architecture, designed and built by architects or not, is inclusive. The question changes to: how to provide conditions for the existence of architecture as medium?

DENISE  
MORANDO

## 2. Issues of Users and Politics

There is always a question of user(s) of certain buildings - who can and who can't use it. The question of a user is then similar to a question of a political subject. Does this similarity make architecture essentially political?

People qualify and judge a building (or a object), appropriate or not, true or false, beautiful or ugly, distinct or vulgar, useful or not, and also as an economic or a symbolic product or a work of art, or, in another words, give a building some sense by giving it some value. For this, they need to feed themselves with information (which is another concept to be defined) and subjectivities – so that their choices can be made, even if they are subordinated to economic, cultural and political domains. Pierre Bourdieu defines habitus as the generating and structuring principle of such choices (practices and representations), constructed by social biography, cultural heritage and educational formation (the amount of capital).

The possibility of looking at a building as a medium, where social practices happen, is to treat it out of its limits of a knowledge field, such as architecture, or of a product set by the building sector, both in-formed by the action of its members – agents responsible for planning, design (including the architect) and execution, building materials manufacturers, public or private agencies responsible for negotiation, approval, project management, control and supervision of works, the agents responsible for operation and maintenance, real state entrepreneurs, academia, etc. This is meant that a building mandatorily implies its users' practices. Otherwise it shall be just a physical record.

This is meant that the choices of the social actors (qualification or judgement, including the decision of “using” it or not a building) are essentially political since they arise from individual and collective arguments and disagreements, which are always brought by the existing conditions of the urban production. As a medium, the building embraces the social and cultural role of object but it brings us to the research environment of the political scenario and its development in time.

The arguments and disagreements, which are necessary to feed any political action, enable social actors to make legitimate (neither legal nor illegal) choices along time. First, this political path cannot be understood as participation (or “becoming part of something”) but it is inserted into a “critical platform of engagement”, taking the words of Markus Miessen. Due to this, anyone who experiences the building and the city (the urban space) is an active social actor. Second, we accept Guillermo López' understanding on the legitimate as the answer to a continuous work towards a result based on dissension (rather than on adaptation) which includes diverging stand points coming, not unilaterally from the power instance

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(from the top down), but from multiple approaches and directions.

Under Bourdieu's perspective, the urban space is constituted by the relation of forces between the social actors that feed, preserve or transform it according to their interests concerning the dispute of its objects - including housing, museums, schools, hospitals, public spaces, parks, transportation, urban services. Or, furthermore, we could say, the urban commons, defined by Ash Amin as "*the patterned ground on which urban life forms and evolves*".

Thus, contemporary society is structured through the struggle for urban commons but also structure the same dispute to the extent that the productive forces determine the urban commons. These are the existing conditions in the urban space in which architecture essentially becomes a political arena.

### 3. Human / Nature Question

Buildings are shaped by the material flows, drawn from nature, and social processes through their design and occupation however ultimately buildings are for humans. Does this mean that Architecture will always be based on an unequal (asymmetrical) treatment of humans and nature?

Milton Santos states that the city is formed by the objects and actions system. The objects (fixed) within the city are technical objects, intentionally designed, built and located to the exercise of certain purposes. They are the material basis for the practices of a certain time. Actions (flows) are associated with the spatial order of objects; accordingly, actions tend to be formatted and materialized by the productive forces governing the space.

In this sense, architecture refers to artistic activities, aesthetic intentions and stylistic designs. But the building, as we have seen before, comes into existence only as a result of the social, environmental, technical, cultural and political interactions, which are determinants of the building as medium. Paradoxically, however, the analysis of contemporary urban space production denounces form-content not built by the people to the extent that the material and human productive forces have undeniably restricted the democratic possibilities of social appropriation of cities. When the productive forces determine the urban space, the effects on the contemporary organization of cities clearly express the technological, economic, environmental and social disparities.

In the actual neoliberal production model for the city, it is possible to think about minor asymmetrical interactions if a legitimate and critical process instituted and validated by those involved is politically constructed.

“... **Actions (flows) are associated with the spatial order of objects; accordingly, actions tend to be formatted and materialized by the productive forces governing the space ...**

According to Bourdieu, the urban space is appropriated through human bodies situated in time and space. But if the urban space (or a building) is appropriated or not, or available or not, depends not only on the possession by the social actor of the different species of capital as well as the structure of the distribution species of capital. The capital, not only cultural and social, but also professional, political, economic, linguistic, symbolic, and importantly nowadays, informational, explains the positions of individuals in the field – dominant (maximum capital) or dominated (minimum capital).

In the contemporary cities we have, on the one hand, informational capital, expressing essentially the processes that dominate our economic, political and productive life (the productive forces governing the space). On the other hand, we have the existence of urban space revealing the social and physical places of distinction or exclusion. The capital embraces assets that will command the way the social actors act; thus, our argument is that when the informational capital alters, the positions of the actors in the field also change.

But, first, it is necessary to define information. We understand the concept information in its ontological use – providing something with form, in order to reinforce the connection between information and the human sphere. The use of information in an ontological sense enables our recognition of that which Rafael Capurro and Birger Hjørland have named communication ontology, in which, not only living beings (flows), but all types of objects (fixes) are capable of producing, processing and exchanging information (the articulation of human and non-human actors proposed by Latour).

We understand that the architectural practice must be based on interaction processes between human and non-human actors, loaded with informational content named mediations. Mediation is the locus of network shared information, capable of politically re-aggregating social actors as the resulting actions transform, distort and modify the situation of all those involved in the production of the urban space.

The mediated information is based on social actors politically acting as “adversaries” (and not enemies, as pointed by Chantal Mouffe), making it perfectly clear that the common is, simultaneously, presupposition and result, as communication among all parties may not take place without a base which arises from a conflict; and the result of communication is a new common expression.

#### 4. Considering Exclusion

We know how - in a very basic way - building could exclude certain groups of users: from denying access to putting spikes on benches. Could we however define also basic architectural (spatial and material) tools working against exclusion?

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As we accept that information is something built as it 'gives form to something' and, only from this point on, generates knowledge and action, we understand that information is not the common, as proposed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, but it enables the common.

Mediated information, if thought as a flexible architectural platform, is completely dependent on the communication relation and it is constituted from methods, provisions, means and languages, which may be used, built and understood by all. Due to this, the technical architectural language and the conventional practice cannot be accepted. The proposed logic of practice – the mediation – allows us to alter informational capital in order to seek (rights) and encounter (access) the common, which is constituted well beyond common public goods, but is imbricate in political dimensions of daily urban life, where the disputed ingredients that embrace the social activities in the cities are – the urban commons.

## 5. The Macro Economic Debate

Architecture is ultimately shaped by macro economic processes - does it mean that beyond a certain scale there is no possibility of making any kind of 'radical' / 'alternative' architecture?

The intellectual (symbolic) expression of each architect, the consumption of dictated styles, the domain of symbolic goods, the technological-constructive innovations and the intellectual separation of design and the building production constitute the existing logic of practice in the architecture field. But, undeniably, the field is not able to build or control other capitals that not only the economic and intellectual ones. Such inability leaves a gateway for economic, cultural, political, academic forces exercise their powers.

The school is the instance possible for the construction of social and political capital and the change of the collective habitus. This implies that educational leaders need to understand, effectively, society and social relations between individuals, the functioning of capitalism and the political arena. Perhaps the first movement is to direct the production of knowledge through interdisciplinary approach to architecture with other areas - social sciences and political science, for example.

Our point of view is that information becomes the thread capable of socially re-aggregating the actors in autonomous but collaborative networks in favour of a legitimate reaction towards the city. The mediation of information and the access to the communication process become the embryonic

form of making another city. John Holloway considers such move as cracks of capitalism, a here-and-now insubordination, a movement of negation-and-creation. These movements are legitimate forces to repress the practices and procedures of Capital-State in contrast to the freedom of choice. Social re-aggregation of the actors due to mediated information enables social practices qualified by the unlikely, the random, the alterity, in an active and a reactive collaborative cycle, as pointed out by Hardt and Negri.

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## 6. Essential Knowledge

We know that architecture goes far beyond its spatial and material aspects - building as a construct of certain socio-political and economical processes. This fact impose a dramatic question on any architect - what is an essential architectural knowledge? What is an essential set of skills any architect should posses? Because, if there is NO essential knowledge or essential set of skill, maybe anybody can be an Architect?

Historically, architects do not react for the possibilities of transformation or overcoming the economic and political principles. They prefer to live with the doubts and uncertainties, taking the risk of being a simple producer of goods or an obedient servant of power. Because of these features, we can affirm that the architecture has strengthened the hegemonic role of the major international and national capital as the architects subordinate themselves to the game of interest set by the economic and the political fields. Besides, the universities have been contributed to produce, process and disseminate information and knowledge, but also legitimize the consumption of symbolic goods and ensure cultural reproduction. Garry Stevens states that there is no field in which the 'ideology of talent' is stronger than art and architecture. The technical representation or the technical design, which arose from the need of Renaissance architects to go beyond the philosophy of aesthetics, turned the architects the privileged interlocutors of power – the only specialists trained to give solution to the rational problems of formal space, function and beauty. That needs to change.

The technical design represents the thoughts and ideas of the architect. But most of the buildings around the world, especially the residential ones, are produced by small groups of people who share information and knowledge from immediate empirical experience of users and/or direct builders. The autoconstruction universe is linked to the way in which social practices of everyday life are established. People build a substantial body of knowledge about how best to build and connect buildings to the infrastructure and urban services as well as to benefit from or to confront the public authorities. It is a process to make and learn from individual and collective experiences passed on, formally and informally, to other ones (how, when, where to build and at what cost), generated by information and transferred by social practices.

In this sense, the locus of mediation values the learning process and enables people's actions. Thus, structured on the encounter of different world views and on communication, education is found in the Paulo Freire's axiom: "knowing that teaching does not mean transferring knowledge, but rather creating possibility for its own production or its construction". The approximation between distinct knowledge fields and diverse human actors through mediation of information configures the rupture of the society's commonsense that the university is the only forum for theoretical discussion or for individualizing the professions.

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# Radical Inclusivity. Architecture and Urbanism

Edited by Krzysztof Nawratek.  
1st edition, dpr-barcelona 2015.

**Editor:** Krzysztof Nawratek

**With contributions by:** Camilio Boano, Kasia Nawratek, Murray Fraser, Chloe Willis, Lucas Ward, Dido Graham, Fran Tonkiss, Alona Martinez Perez, Tom Penny, Jack Woodward, Anna Minton, Yusnani Mohd Yusof, Marek Kozlowski, David Johnson, Joshua Cole, Matthew Gandy, Robert Brown, Jaimie Li How Cheong, Adam Adamopoulos, Lee Cheetham, Matt Coker, Matt Clark, Emily Argall, Emily Argall, Simon Bradbury, Denise Morado, Ethel Baraona Pohl.

**Design:** Alexander Horton-Howe, Benjamin Huggins, Matthew Oxley

**ISBN-13:** 978-84-942414-7-5

**ISBN-10:** 8494241478

**Date:** June 2015

**Publisher:** dpr-barcelona

On this book has been used the following fonts:

**Century Gothic**, designed by Monotype Design Studio, Sol Hess, Morris Fuller Benton.

**Baskerville**, designed by John Baskerville in 1724.



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