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DOSSIER TRANSLATIONS

Architecture and power

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Architecture is a carrier of power. Ranging from the regulation of land use which defines a context, to the building of enclosed structures that define a program, and to the development of aesthetic systems that justify a form, carrying out an architecture project means responding to the necessities of a certain power to manifest itself in the social space.

Mortgage debt, land use deregulation, and real estate speculation are all aspects of a crisis carried through the products of our practice. As architects, breaking this complicity demands to confront the political and social character of our practice, and to question the basis that supports the power our work helps to manifest. Avoiding this inquiry entails the risk of perpetuating ourselves as agents of collateral damage or - even worse - of being left to our own devices by our present accomplices.

In Michael Hardt's words, "...power no longer needs architecture as a figuring of institutional control [...] a pressing issue therefore becomes whether the architectural discipline responds by fortifying the boundaries of 'architecture' as a discipline or reconfigures its space of knowledge into different practices of 'design', of which the normative objects of design become only a part." (in Hight 2006, page 70).

This dossier explores the scope of the second alternative. However reconfiguring our space of knowledge implies not only opening the discipline's boundaries, but also questioning the hierarchy that is traditionally assigned to it as a main agent of defining physical and social spaces. It also implies reassessing its value in the current processes of proliferation and deepening of other design disciplines. Thus, in order to reconfigure our space of knowledge, we need to recognize how these "different practices of 'design'" enable us to carry out the power that define these spaces.

The authors, ideas, and projects that follow have been selected by their practical ability to link design to types of power supported on social and democratic practices, as well as for their theoretical ability to present future crisis that may result from frictions between design, architecture, media and cultural policies. These experiences come from contexts as diverse as Newark, Florianópolis, La Plata, Brooklyn, Vienna, Lucerne, Berlin, London, Santiago, Amsterdam and New Haven.

The dossier is preceded by an interview with Damon Rich - artist, architect and urban planner - who defines design as a facilitator of democratic and participatory processes leading to the enrichment of public policies and municipal norms.

After this discussion, Gui Bonsiepe presents a critical analysis of the relationship between design and the weakening of the public sphere, reviewing a series of discursive trends that favor the link between design and capitalism, and contrasting them against his proposal to link design and democracy. As a possible manifestation of this type of practices, Jacob Moore reviews the experience of the Center for Urban Pedagogy, exploring the validity of adapting its model to architectural practice, by analyzing its programs and its economic nature. After this - and focusing on the labor subject - Marion von Osten argues that designers themselves have been a carrier of democratic weakening through the normative regulation of their lifestyle, expressed in the definition of cultural policies that yearn for the industrialization of cultural production. In turn, Jesko Fezer sustains that these same designers can be even more decisive than architects or urbanists in the definition of strategies to overcome the crisis of the neoliberal city. Finally, Camila Cociña reviews the student demonstrations in Santiago, as agents in the construction of a new democratic space based on developing, instead of nullifying, social conflicts.

As an epilogue, Metahaven's graphic article allows us to take a peek at a dystopic reality in which design has been the accomplice of a political crisis, confronting us with the full scope of our responsibility and of our potential to change the world. **m**

HIGHT, Christopher (2006). "Designing Commonsplaces: Riffing with Michael Hardt on the Multitude and Collective Intelligence". *Architectural Design* 76, n.º 5, pages 70-73.