

or explicit conceptions we have had on the subject, might reinstall the role of road infrastructure in the concert of the contemporary city, proposing the landscape (understood as a physical and cultural construction) as being in charge of integrating (or rather articulating) the relationship between a road infrastructure (segregated at times) and the city. [m](#)

NOTES

(1) Marcel Smets, Professor of Urban Planning at the Catholic University of Leuven, is the architect of the Flamish State since 2002.

(2) American architect, landscape designer and designer.

(3) The Rio de Janeiro ring road is formed by the Linha Amarela freeway, Lagos Barra street and the Avenue of the Americas. The Aterro do Flamengo is a bypass of Lagos Barra street, closer to the beach, which continues along Atlantica Avenue (Copacabana), Avenue Viera Souto (Ipanema), Avenue Delfin Moreira (Leblon) and Avenue Niemeyer, which joins Avenue of the Americas.

(4) The ring road surrounding Guanabara Bay is foreed by the Presidente Costa E. Silva Bridge, the Avenida do Contorno, the Rodada do Contorno de Guanabara, the Rodada Santos Dumont and the Rodada Washington Luiz.

(5) Part of this phenomenon is explained by the growth of the "favelas" and the fast process of high rise buildings in the south zone of the city.

(6) The idea of the park was of Lota Macedo Soares, who, supported by the governor Carlo Laceda, gathered Roberto Burle Marx, botanist Luiz Emygdio de Mello Filho and architects Eduardo Reidy, Sergio Bernardes, Carlos Werneck de Carvalho and Jorge Machado Moreira. It is noteworthy that also the architect and engineer Berta Leitchic Hélio Mamede worked on the project. Later, in 1999 the 'heirs' of Burle Marx's office restored and revitalised the *Aterro do Flamengo*.

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Archigram in Monte Carlo and the idea of an equipped landscape

Claudia Costa Cabral

*"I like to think
(and the sooner the better!)
of a cybernetic meadow
where mammals and computers
live together in mutually programming
harmony
like pure water
touching the clear sky.
I like to think
(right now, please)
of a cybernetic forest
filled with pines and electronics
where deer stroll peacefully
past computers
as if they were flowers
with spinning blossoms.
I like to think
(it has to be!)
of a cybernetic ecology
where we are free of our labors
and joined back to nature
returned to our mammal
brothers and sisters
and all watched over
by machines of loving grace.
The Realist."*
David Greene, *All watched over by machines of loving grace*, 1969.

"En Monte Carlo, cuando todos esperaban de nosotros algún tipo de máquina de bordes redondeados que deambulara

*por allí, hicimos una aparente nada.
Solamente un pedazo de tierra."*

Peter Cook

The ninth edition of ARCHIGRAM magazine (1970) had a packet of flower seeds attached. The publisher remembered the emergence of ecological questions and included expressions such as "survival" and "sustainment", stressing the distance from the mechanistic and productivist metaphors implied in the megastructures which had inhabited the first issues of the magazine, published in London since 1961 by the members of the Archigram Group (1961-1974): Peter Cook, Warren Chalk, Ron Herron, Dennis Crompton, David Greene and Michael Webb.

The dream of the technological garden, of the cybernetic forest for the electronic aborigine that David Greene proposed in 1969 with the poem "All watched over by machines of loving grace" would respond to the "crane logic" that continuously built and rebuilt Plug-in City, the disposable city that Peter Cook had drawn in 1964. This implied reviewing the iconography of the machine and the consumption that until then had distinguished Archigram's view.

Archigram's first interpretation for the question of consumption in the society of affluence, synthesised in the concept of "expendability" (or ability to discard), supposed total ignorance regarding the inevitable ecological implications of dissipation, a subject that would become unavoidable in the course of a decade. For Archigram, the question to be discussed was always the implication between technology and architecture. The transformation of the former, with the emergence of electronic systems,

seemed to press for a new definition of our discipline.

At the end of the sixties, the position of the small ARCHIGRAM magazine with reference to architecture journals had changed. The subjects proposed by Archigram in an iconoclastic tone (the consumer society and disposable architecture in 1963, the space race and scientific fiction in 1964, cybernetics and robotics in 1968) were also progressively assumed by the big publications. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN published the thematic issue on spatial technology in 1967, edited by John McHale; Royston Landau was in charge of an issue on cybernetics published the following year, with articles by Gordon Pask and Nicholas Negroponte.

At the end of that decade, Archigram belonged to an *avantgarde* legitimised by English architecture critics, without going through the execution of concrete architectural projects, except for exhibition prototypes or structures of temporary use; except for the private professional practice of each one of its members, as a group, Archigram remained basically in the realm of paper architecture.

The opportunity to change this situation presented itself in December 1970, when Archigram won the competition promoted by the Principality of Monaco, for the construction of an entertainment center in Monte Carlo. Beginning in May 1969, the Monte Carlo competition was developed in two stages. The first one took place as a selection process from portfolios, after which Archigram was selected together with thirteen competitor teams coming from England, France, Finland, Norway, Germany and the

United States of America. There were two other internationally renowned teams, led by Ricardo Bofill and Frei Otto respectively. In the final stage the Principality was assisted by an international jury, which had the participation of Pierre Vago, Ove Arup, René Sarger and Michel Ragon.

Although Archigram presented itself as a group, the winner project had actually been developed by four of its members (Peter Cook, Dennis Crompton, David Greene and Ron Herron), in daily sessions in workshops lent by the Architectural Association during the summer holidays of 1969. Colin Fournier, Ken Allison and Tony Rickaby participated as collaborators; Frank Newby, the prestigious English engineer, adviser of Cedric Price in the London Aviary and usual collaborator of James Stirling, acted as a consultant.

The competition rules required a polyvalent building, suitable for a wide range of public activities (between 1,500 and 2,000 people). The structure had to be capable to be adapted to a series of very different programmes, with specific requirements such as arenas for international circuses, sport fields, ice-skating rinks, athletics events, setting for art events and banquet halls, dances and receptions. Apart from these changing and temporary uses, the teams were asked to propose a permanent occupation for the building, so that each competitor had to invent a complementary programme, in keeping with the ambitious variety of activities required by the Principality.

The profile of the jury might explain the decision in favour of Archigram.

Arup and Sarger were engineers and sympathised, as did Ragon and Vago, with technically sophisticated solutions. Actually, the type of response that could be expected of Archigram. The expectation is partly fulfilled, although not with the exuberant megastructuralistic iconography that the magazine challenged the architectural scene in 1964, in editions such as *Amazing Archigram* or *Metropolis*. Actually, what distinguishes Archigram's proposal for Monte Carlo is neither the technological expressionism nor the iconography close to the universe of science fiction and comic inherent to the group, but a determined idea about the landscape.

Underground architecture and equipped landscape

The place allocated to the entertainment centre was a stretch of land reclaimed from the sea, extending between Princess Grace Avenue and the Mediterranean, East of the famous Monte Carlo Casino. On the avenue side, the land faced an area of high value residential buildings; on the coast, it was adjacent to a shore sector generated by another embankment, intensively used during the day but empty by night.

Archigram's trajectory was built on fictitious projects most of which were not designed for definite sites (and this was when they did not clearly respond to the relationship with the place with a founding relationship for the architecture, such as in the series of projects on mobility, from Herron's *Walking City* —1964—, to Greene and Webb's *Drive-in Housing* —1966). But the group offers an attentive and lucid description of the site in Monte Carlo. In spite of all the luxury and glamour associated

to the Principality, they found the place calm and nostalgic, "insecure in its role". Despite its strong coastal past, the architects admitted to have been surprised "by a deserted seafront walk and the absence of limousines".

At the time of the competition, Archigram was developing *Instant City* (1969), a set of portable elements designed to generate and favour ephemeral urban events in deliberately undetermined places. Interest in transiency and in "architecture as a kit of parts" persists in the proposal for Monte Carlo. But Archigram knows that "that place is not just any place, in the sense that it might be, if it were an *Instant City kit*" (Archigram, 1972).

Archigram's proposal begins by valuing the place and pragmatically taking advantage of its free virtues. The proximity of the sea, the nearness of the beach, the potentiality to capture the movement generated by the "lineal city" that is virtually developed on the Mediterranean coast along a succession of small resorts and the lack of public green areas in the surroundings, are good reasons to preserve this particular place as a natural landscape. Although not without touching it.

Archigram's strategy is to hide the presence of the building against the original landscape, which is achieved by digging a big hole, building in the underground all the rooms of the entertainment centre and forming on top a new vegetable surface, continuing the natural ground. This physical reconstruction of the ground allows presenting the urban park as an area of permanent use, extending the zone of public use from the beach to the slope formed by the cover. Refusing

to insert another monument in the landscape, Archigram buries the "instrument-building" under a bucolic exterior.

To the polymorphic aspirations of the programme, Archigram responds with a structure without appearance; to the multiple functionality required, with the idea of a tool box hidden under the park, which can be manipulated and used to build practically anything (Archigram, 1972).

The underground building spreads on the sole floor of the circular plant with six independent accesses that go down from the park. The structural solution, envisaged by Newby, consists of a 79 m diameter concrete dome supported on peripheral buttresses. Except for the aerial network of technical infrastructure, regulated by a grid installed under the concrete carcass, the inner architectural elements are all mobile. Archigram designed complete series of accessory components (type-cells for bathroom accessories, escalators, platforms and bridges, support structures and service pillars called "robots") which should move and combine in various forms according to the event in progress.

The whole space was conceived as a stage. The movable parts, arranged like an external ring for services, move and rapidly transform the appearance of the central plant. Archigram explains the cover as the television studio, in which "the ubiquitous range of the equipment is barely used as the background by the ingenuity of the producer of each event, in which the fifteen standard pieces are the materials with which the public "might produce its own circumstances", where the "true architecture consists in a particular combination produced at any

moment in time" (Cook, 1970).

Those expectations have repercussions on the design of the park above. Greene took charge of its conception: a green hill, in the English tradition of a natural garden, but served by an unsuspected network of service points discretely located every six metres (the necessary technical infrastructure for the performance of any outside activity provided with electricity), creating a public area associated to the beach, that anybody could approach and connect all sorts of equipment (telephone, icebox, airbed, music, cinema, etc.)

The park specifies the notion of "technically equipped nature" that Archigram had proposed for the first time with the ironical Rokplug and Logplug designed by Greene in 1968, a notion that was retaken with *Gardener's Notebook* in ARCHIGRAM 9 (1970). The naïve Rokplug and Logplug consisted in a prosaic looking rock and trunk, covered with lichens and flowers; a sort of ecological kitsch, as a kit of strategically distributed equipment amidst real nature, of which they are a profane but pragmatic copy, since they opportunely offer light, water, telephone network, radio and even a credit card system. Its similarity with real nature products needs to announce them from the highway, next to the Shell and Texaco posters, for the benefit of the new Bedouins of the gasoline civilisation, urban nomads of the electronic age in the re-tribalised world foreseen by Marshall McLuhan (McLuhan, 1996).

The "*Gardener's Notebook*" insists on the same point, although discarding the allegoric component. "Can the whole world be a complete herbal-green

sphere?" (Greene, 1969). The answer is yes, with the LAWUN project (Locally – Available – World - Unseen – Networks), a pun with the word lawn and the anagram of the ubiquitous system of infrastructure set underground, whose universal availability breeds the technically equipped natural landscape.

As from figures representing ephemeral situations of the use of the natural environment (man fishing on the river bank with his portable television set, people having a picnic in the park, etc.), Greene proposes the idea of the "non-specialised and transitory environment". Made viable and favoured by some type of technological availability, and not by architectural structures, the situations seem to him an "invisible city" that hardly exists while the action of its occupants lasts: "thus, everything is somehow invisible. The temporary place, perhaps barely retained by the memory. An architecture that exists only in relation to time" (Greene, 1970).

Contrary to the idea of an architecture that builds physical boundaries, which implies not only a spatial proposal but also a definite mark on the place, the much more precarious notion of the transitory mechanism in the landscape and its correlation with a discontinuous time (that "barely exists in the memory") allows Greene to incorporate the idea of "an architecture of absence" (Archigram, 1972).

It is not accidental that the notion of "architecture of absence" comes from the work of the Northamerican artist Robert Smithson, a figure linked to the emergence of Land Art and to the updating of the idea of landscape in the sixties. Greene specifically refers to "Incidents of

mirror – Travel in the Yucatan" (1969), which consists in a transitory action on the landscape. Smithson accommodates twelve rectangular mirrors on different natural sites in Yucatán, doing what he calls "nine slideworks". After the compositions were photographed by the artist, they were dismantled and the mirrors were put away. The work ceased to exist (Flam, 1996).

That is how it had to be in Monte Carlo. Archigram renounces the rhetorical impulse of mega structures of the middle of the decade, their figurative sense and their iconographic repertoire based on spatial technology and on pop culture. In Monte Carlo, it aims at absence with the nonbuilding dissolved between the city and the sea; with an invisible architecture, that can only be perceived through its reflections. The exuberant collages that Archigram produces for Monte Carlo still include pop iconography, the happy psychedelic dream of the sixties, but barely as flashes, like the fleeting trail of something else. The cover is no longer represented but the event⁽¹⁾, they are indications of innumerable non lasting events, though they may be repeated, that electronically conjure the equipped landscape.

Landscape, primitivism and technology

The idea of landscape proposed by Archigram in Monte Carlo concludes a series of other rather fictitious proposals, whose main theme is the fusion between primitive and technological. The aborigine's dream in Greene's cybernetic forest, as a basis for the equipped landscape, was associated to a displacement corresponding to post-war technological changes: an industrial culture, producer of consumer goods,

becomes electronic culture whose main goods are intangible (images, information or services). If the machine could be clearly identified as an artificial dominion opposed to nature, the concept of cybernetic forest evoked the promiscuity between manufactured and natural, between artificial and organic.

Favoured by the crisis of confidence in the technical process of the late sixties, by the escalation of the Vietnam war and the diffusion of the hippie culture, the "return to the primitive" was by no means a new idea. The "revolutionary pastoral" of the sixties, which assimilated the Beat culture and incorporated pacifist and environmentalist movements, has its background in modernity with the "good savage" of illustration (Gitlin, 1993). In architecture, echoes of this romance were heard in the first modern generations. The interest that Le Corbusier, Taut or Sert had for primitive cultures continued to be present in post-war modernism, influenced by the growing weight of anthropological and ethnographic discourse.

Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture, published by Sibyl Moholy-Nagy (1957), the study of van Eyck on the Dogon (1961) and the exhibition "Architecture without Architects" organised by Rudofsky (1964), prove an anthropological view of primitive cultures that, looking into vernacular themes for an authentic essence of inhabiting destroyed by the consumer society, would lead to reconsidering the relationship of architecture with nature and place (Goldhagen y Legault, 2000).

However, it is precisely in the concept of "authenticity" where the difference

between the “anthropological-primitive” of Rudofsky or van Eyck and Archigram’s “technological-primitive” rests. For the former, recovering the vernacular forms means returning to stable essences, to the implicit innocence of the craft landscape produced by cultures untouched by civilisation and by machine technology.

Archigram’s idea of landscape and its primitive connotations, apparently conservative, does not have to do exactly with the possibility of re-founding architecture on nature and place, but moving from an organic relationship with nature, which might ensure the design of architectural forms integrated into the place, towards a relationship of cybernetic symbiosis with it, which before had made the aspect of these architectural forms irrelevant. In the incipient cybernetic jargon adapted by Archigram, architecture is no longer a matter of hardware but of software; it is no longer the design of an artefact into nature, but the precarious prevision of a type of relationship with it, undetermined and transitory.

Andreas Huyssen noticed that, in the sixties, the anthropological notion of culture as a system of communication was re-written in the terms of communication technologies by Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media*. In essays widely spread in the art scene of the decade, McLuhan proposes a mythical pattern in which four stages of human development can be distinguished: oral/aural culture of primitive and tribal societies; visual culture of phonetic writing; visual culture of mechanic technology (with the invention of the press); and the present return to the aural and tactile patterns of primitive cultures, redefined by the

electrical and electronic technologies of the television era (Huyssen, 1995).

Archigram’s equipped nature is the realisation of McLuhan’s mythical model, in which technologies would be returning man to an integral and primitive culture, in a re-tribalized world by the ubiquitous and instantaneous presence of electricity. Man, the food provider of primitive societies, reappears as the information collector in a technologically sophisticated society, not any less nomad than his Palaeolithic ancestors (McLuhan, 1996).

Archigram took the debate between architecture and technology to the end. The former progresses from the metaphorical representation of an industrial world focussed on the production and consumption of goods, to its progressive dissolution in symbiotic landscapes of the electronic culture. The last step is consistent with McLuhan’s basically optimistic view: the model of demiurgic reconciliation among man, nature and technical culture. But it is also a point of no return.

The Principality of Monaco abandoned the project of the entertainment centre and shortly afterwards, Archigram published its last magazine, ARCHIGRAM 9 1/2, in 1974. We can see the idea of the green hill by the Mediterranean, marked just by service points of the size of golf holes, like the death of architecture, as its recapitulation in the face of the autonomous logic of technologies that depend less on matter all the time. But, we can also see it as Archigram’s last attempt to translate emerging realities into drawings and designs. Thinking the world through a project⁽²⁾. [m](#)

NOTES

(1) An architecture made before the event that the envelope (Archigram, 1972).

(2) This text is based on my doctoral thesis, Archigram Group 1961-1974: A fable of technology (UPC, Barcelona, 2002) conducted with the support of CAPES, Brazilian Government. Thanks to Josep Maria Montaner, director of the thesis, and Dennis Crompton (Archigram Group).

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Flows, Patterns and Topographies: The Urban work of Landscape’s devices as revealed in the Open City of Ritoque

Jessie Marshall

"There are, then, different kinds of 'flow': [] And these flows leave different traces on the landscape. [] It is not so much that 'things' move in time and space, as if time and space were somehow a fixed template within which the world simply is. It is more than these flows- be they walkers on ridges or droplets in a water cycle - are produced different forms of time and space: for example, cycles, channels, reversals,