

Criticism of the Architectural Culture since 1978 in “Spazio e Società” Magazine

«Espaces et Société»; Postmodernism; Internationalism; Architecture and Power

/Abstract

Since 1975, the French magazine *Espaces et Société*, directed by Henri Lefebvre and Anatole Kopp since 1970, has been distributed in Italy in an autonomous version consisting partly of translations of selected articles from the French edition, and partly with contributions of authors from Italy and abroad solicited by the Italian editorial staff.

After the first two years of transition, starting in 1978 Giancarlo De Carlo directed the magazine towards a forum for debate and content that this text¹ intends to examine in its first five years of publication through the presentation of some of the most significant articles. This way the critical positions of the magazine with respect to the topics of the day can be framed, also highlighting its originality with respect to some dominant lines that coincided with the thinking of its director, whose advertising and publishing activities are almost indistinguishable from his architectural and urban planning activities. Some of these include: attention to the dynamics of process formation rather than the formal outcome, the construction of a collective space for society rather than the affirmation of an ideological principle, cosmopolitan internationalism opposed to the internationalisation of language, first modernist, then postmodernist. And again, precisely from a review of the Modern Movement based on a critique of Post-Modernism, other important considerations arise regarding crucial issues of the transition between the 1970s and the 1980s, such as the intellectual role of the architect and his/her relationship with power vis-à-vis mass society.

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¹ The text constitutes the contribution presented by the author to the conference: *Theory's History, 196X/199X. Challenges in the Historiography of Architectural Knowledge - Session: Thinking the Social*. Brussels, 8-10 February 2017.

Structure: an open field to debates

On presenting the journal's new edition in 1978 [Fig. 1], in the editor's note Giancarlo De Carlo stressed² the new project's debt to the homonymous *Espaces et Sociétés*³ which since 1975 has been present in Italy in an edition published by the publisher Moizzi and Spinelli of Milan, already engaged in the dissemination of Henri Lefebvre's thought⁴ [Fig. 2-3]. The first two issues of the same year (1 and 2) include a selection of translated articles in the French edition, while the following year (3 and 4) the magazine offered contributions from other authors including Giuseppe Samonà, Carlo Doglio and A+P Smithson⁵, which reveal a desire to propose an independent, autonomous line of interpretation⁶, well identifiable in the cultural fields of the editor-in-chief until 1976 Riccardo Mariani, and the director Giancarlo De Carlo⁷ from 1978. With regard to the former, it is useful to emphasise how he can be considered a link between Lefebvre's theory, Carlo Doglio's urban approach (also shared by De Carlo) and the Florentine school. Assistant to Leonardo Ricci, who wrote the preface of the text *Spazio e politica: il diritto alla città*⁸, in those years he shared an interest with the latter in the relationship between new communities and territorial expansion, also in light of the rereading of historical experiences⁹.



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2 Giancarlo De Carlo, "Editoriale," *Spazio e Società* 1 (January 1978): 4. See also, Isabella Daidone, *Giancarlo De Carlo. Gli editoriali di Spazio e Società* (Roma: Gangemi editore, 2018).

3 The original edition of the magazine was directed by Henri Lefebvre and Anatole Kopp from 1970.

4 The creation of the "twin" magazine went hand in hand with the activity of the publishing house for the dissemination of Italian translations of Lefebvre's texts, specifically: *Spazio e politica: il diritto alla città* (Milano: Moizzi, 1976) and *Spazio e Società*, la produzione dello spazio (Milano: Moizzi, 1978). See Francesco Biagi, "La ricezione italiana degli studi urbani di Henri Lefebvre: un fiume carsico a cavallo tra XX e XXI secolo," *Altrionovecento. Ambiente Tecnica Società*, http://www.fondazionemicheletti.it/altrionovecento/articolo.aspx?id_articolo=40&tipo_articolo=d_saggi&id=376 (accessed on 21/04/2020).

5 A+P Smithson, "Alla ricerca di un nuovo lirismo," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 7-16, on which will be further discussed later on.

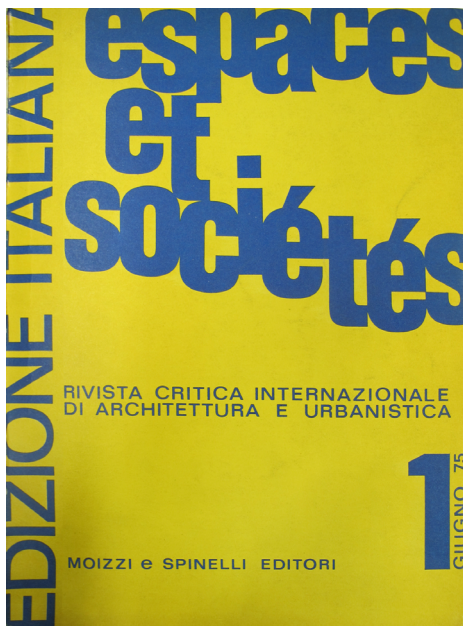
6 The nature of the dual bond with the French magazine seemed to become explicit with the evolution of the title. The French title remained in the first two issues of 1975, accompanied by the subtitle in Italian: "Rivista critica di architettura e urbanistica". The second issue (1975) was hyphenated with the Italian title – *Espaces et Sociétés* – *Spazio e Società* – which was then reversed in issues 3 and 4 of 1976. In 1978 the French part was dropped from the magazine's title, retaining only the Italian until its closure in 2001, adding the title in English from issue 18 of 1982 to consolidate its international position.

7 In 1976 the editorial staff consisted of Luigi Colajanni, Gaddo Morpurgo, Daniele Pini and Lamberto Dehò, who took care of graphics. Following are contributions to the magazine by the first three: Daniele Pini, "L'insegnamento dell'architettura," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 80; Riccardo Mariani, "Quarant'anni dalla morte di Persico," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 92-141; Gaddo Morpurgo, "Venezia: politica culturale e organizzazione del territorio," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 98-108. In 1978 he took over the direction. The new editorial team was: Gabriele Corsani, Mario Mastropietro, Gaddo Morpurgo and Daniele Pini. Giancarlo De Carlo would be the director for all 92 issues from 1978 to 2000. Among the many who participated in the magazine, the only one mentioned here is Giuliana Baracco, De Carlo's wife, who managed editorial coordination from issue 1 to 89, also a central figure for her role as translator from English. Five publishers: the historic Mazzotta in Milan, Sansoni in Florence, MIT Press in Cambridge (Massachusetts), SAGEP in Genoa, Gangemi in Rome, Maggioli in Rimini.

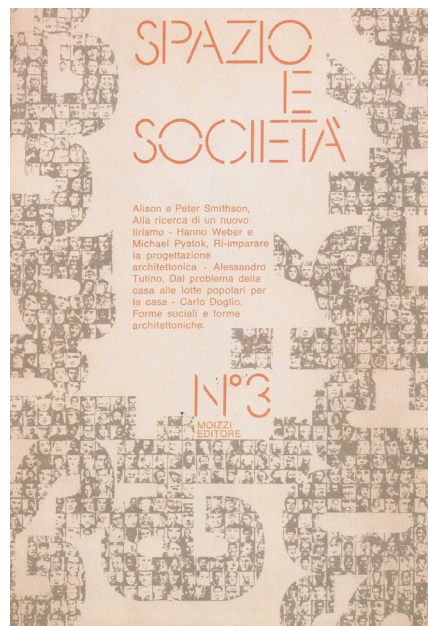
8 See footnote 4.

9 See Leonardo Ricci, "New Towns a scala territorial," *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 73-80, and by Riccardo Mariani, in the same years in which he assumed the position of editor-in-chief of the magazine: *Abitazione e città nella Rivoluzione industriale* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1975); *Fascismo e città nuove* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1976). In the same field of study, see in the same issues of the magazine the contributions of: Giuseppe Samonà, "La città in estensione," *Espaces et Sociétés* 2 (October 1975): 81-87; Carlo Doglio, "Città e dintorni," *Espaces et Sociétés* – *Spazio e Società*, (October 1975): 95-98; Carlo Doglio, "Forme sociali e forme architettoniche," *Espaces et Sociétés* – *Spazio e Società* 3, (March 1976): 62-72.

Fig. 1
Spazio e Società 1, (1978).



2



3

Returning to the development of the editorial project, the introduction to issue number 3 (1976)¹⁰ shows a “divergence” from the scope of the French journal which has society as its concept, while now it was intended to focus on space by defining a situation of symmetry and complementarity:

“The two journals will move on two different bands of the same spectrum...to explore a band rather than another inducing the readjustment, beyond the instrumentation, of ideological perspectives¹¹”.

Instrumentation and ideological perspectives one intertwines according to the others in the organisational structure of the contents presented in the magazine, aimed at giving life to a mode of discussion where the topics are not programmatically explained, while the way in which they intend to develop them is. Giancarlo De Carlo declared this by assuming the leadership in 1978, intending to follow “alternating oscillations between objectives and proposals¹² in a tentative process that allowed the editorial line to be constantly checked¹³, an evident and declared analogy with the broader idea of an architect’s project, of which publishing and literature is a part¹⁴.

10 “From *Espaces et société* to *Spazio e Società*”, *Spazio e Società* 3 (January-March 1976): 3. Declared as the first of a new series, the publications stopped immediately the following year and then resumed in 1978.

11 Ibid.

12 De Carlo, “Editorial,” 4.

13 See for example Lamberto Rossi, “Viaggio all’interno di *Spazio e Società*,” *Spazio e Società* 29 (March 1985): 114-115; Giancarlo De Carlo, “Editoriale,” *Spazio e Società* 68 (October-December 1994): 6-11, with a response from Livio Sichirollo, in “Nota su ‘Facciamo il punto’, S&S n. 68/94,” *Spazio e Società* 71 (July-September 1995): 114-115. See also the final issue of 2001 where a sort of general assessment of the experience as a whole is offered through some “cuts” of various issues.

14 It is worth mentioning how De Carlo’s project-process approach feeds on narrative methods that were certainly consolidated by the architect’s well-known encounters with circles and personalities belonging to the world of literature. Here it is only mentioned in passing because it would require a much longer discussion and a specific investigation, a certain affinity that can be found between *Spazio e Società* and Elio Vittorini and Italo Calvino’s *Menabò*. See: Stefano Giovannuzzi, “Vittorini il *Menabò* e la neoavanguardia,” in *Vittorini e la città Politecnica*, ed. Virna Brigatti and Silvia Cavalli (Pisa: ETS, 2018), 95-111. A reference to the analogy between the forms of Vittorini’s editing and De Carlo’s “narrative” project can be found in Matteo Sintini, “Nelle città del mondo. Cosmopolitismo nell’opera e nel pensiero di Giancarlo De Carlo,” in *Multicultural Cities in the Mediterranean World*, edited Marco Folin and Rosa Tamborrino (Aisu International, 2019 conference proceedings, e-book), 310-330.

Fig. 2
Spazio e Società 3, (1976).

Fig. 3
Espaces et Sociétés. Rivista critica internazionale di Architettura e Urbanistica 1, (1975).

An open forum necessary to provide tools and approaches capable of interpreting the complexity of the reality of the moment thanks to fundamental contributions from the social sciences in a broad sense, always leaving the issues unresolved, avoiding definitive positions, especially with regard to the formal matters involving the study of relational processes, as they existed before and would continue even in the event of a dissolution of physical configurations, which by nature are always changing¹⁵.

The journal's "open" nature is manifested also in the identification of the "public"¹⁶ as potential readers:

"All those who by profession observe or transform – directly or indirectly – the physical and human environment; students, including young people who are not students in the institutional sense and yet are preparing themselves to observe and transform; but even those who are not allowed to observe and transform and therefore, suffer most acutely the effects of superficial observations and irresponsible transformations¹⁷".

The articulation of the sections is designed to encourage this user participation and develop the debate according to the objectives set out above. The journal's "open" style is reflected in the subdivision of the headings, which immediately indicates that these can be expanded, added to or replaced. The French edition's division into columns was substantially retained even after 1978 up to the mid-1980s (no. 33), when the "Recensioni" (Reviews) were added (from no. 34) along with "Qualità diffusa" (Widespread quality) and "Libri e riviste" (Books and journals). Those that characterise the first structure mirror the following subdivision: "Congetture" (Conjectures), featuring contributions that do not address a single argument in a systematic manner, useful for proposing situations that deserve an in-depth examination that the journal would take up in subsequent publications. "Argomenti" (Arguments) are reviews of a set of books just published whose subject matter is interesting, similarly to "Avvenimenti" (Events), drawing inspiration from facts and events. "Documenti" (Documents), on the other hand, offers the reader materials that are not easily found. Instead, the boxes dubbed "Questioni" (Issues) (which remained until no. 13, 1981) within the main articles are useful as a guide to the reading where topics are specified to help the reader participate, and as tools for the direct involvement of experts or spokespersons on the topic, who are specifically invited to participate in the debate.

De Carlo thus applies the role of the Italian intellectual-architect-professional in an original way, a "typical" figure of the Italian scene during all the 20th century

15 Ludovico Quaroni, "Il ratto della città," *Spazio e Società* 8 (December 1979): 5-26, followed by two responses: Massimo Casavola, Francesco Cellini, Robert Maestro, Giuseppe Samonà, Antonio Terranova, "A proposito del ratto della città di Quaroni (no. 8)," *Spazio e Società* 10 (June 1980): 88-99 and Carlo Melograni, "A proposito del ratto della città di Quaroni (no. 8)," *Spazio e Società* 11 (September 1980): 92-97.

16 The issue had been a central focus for De Carlo since the previous decade. See Giancarlo De Carlo, "Il pubblico dell'architettura", which first appeared in the famous text *La Piramide rovesciata* (Bari: Di Donato, 1968), then in issue no. 5 in 1970 of *Parametro*.

17 Giancarlo De Carlo, "Editoriale", *Spazio e Società* 1 (January 1978): 4.

common to many other new “Masters”¹⁸ experiences, such as: *Casabella* first and then *Rassegna* under the editorship of Vittorio Gregotti, *Zodiac and Hinterland* under Guido Canella, *Controspazio* under Paolo Portoghesi, and *Lotus* under Pierluigi Nicolini. The journals’ editors perform the function of an all-round “critic” similarly to what occurred in those same years as a result of the encounter between the historians liberated from the profession and the professionals by now excluded from the occupation of historian¹⁹, and by not entrusting all-Italian specificity to journalists or professional editors, as pointed out by Jean Louis Cohen²⁰.

Although often on opposite sides as regards content, the Genoese architect shared with them the concept of the intellectual task and commitment to the profession, to be understood also as political difficulties of the profession and teaching of architecture²¹, thus renewing the Ernesto Nathan Rogers lesson learned by many members of this young generation precisely within the pages of a magazine: *Casabella-Continuità*. The greatest gap is recorded around the concept of a possible direct link between formal choices and political ideologies, which produced differences not only of a cultural type but also of a methodological and design approach. De Carlo considered the former to be determined by a more structured series of causes, still originating from political factors, yet broader, and not in the sense of belonging to a system of thought, in this case of a neo-Marxist matrix²².

This position finds a clear exemplification in architectural viewpoints by comparing the opposite experience²³ of Aldo Rossi and Giancarlo De Carlo as curators of the exhibition at the Triennale di Milano. In 1967, as regards the organisation of the 14th exhibition, the discussion on the shape and content of the setup became an opportunity to compare two contrasting worlds, both very present in the debate of the time. While the former fulfilled the same radical operation of ideological adhesion in the choice of an autonomous formal code based on the theory of “type”, the latter considered shape to be the result of a relational system that seeks to provide an interpretation of the complex world of mass society.

18 The definition is used by taking here the words with which Bruno Zevi describes the architects mentioned, participants in the Milan exhibition *Nuovi disegni per il mobile italiano* of 1960. See Roberto Durbiano, *I nuovi maestri. Architetti tra politica e cultura nel dopoguerra* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2000).

19 See Jean Louis Cohen, “Dall’affermazione ideologica alla storia professionale”, *Zodiac* 21 (1999): 38.

20 *Ivi*: 39.

21 De Carlo’s editorial in issue no. 14 of 1981, applying the usual review of the editorial line helps clarify other aspects of the relationship between society and the architectural profession as the key topics of discussion in the journal. See also Serge Chermayeff, “Valori ed etica nella professione dell’architetto: domande e risposte”, *Spazio e Società* 26 (June 1984): 75-92.

22 Often declared to be De Carlo’s remoteness from socialist realism and the possibility that this could provide examples of society’s spatial construction. Consider De Carlo’s well-known affinity for anarchist movements and the influences of Pëtr Alekseevič Kropotkin. In this regard, see the responses of and on Colin Ward in the journal: Colin Ward, “Educazione alla conoscenza per la trasformazione dell’ambiente”, *Spazio e Società* 4 (December 1978): 72-84; Egle Becchi, “A proposito di Colin Ward (On Colin Ward) (no. 4)”, *Spazio e Società* 5 (January 1979): 5-6. See also Giancarlo De Carlo, “L’architetto e il potere”, *Gli spiriti dell’architettura*, ed. Livio Sichirollo (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1992): 191-197.

23 The first divergences are manifested specifically in the topics of *Casabella-Continuità* with De Carlo’s well-known article addressed to Aldo Rossi and Guido Canella. See Giancarlo De Carlo, “Problemi concreti per i giovani delle colonne”, *Casabella-Continuità* 204 (February-March 1955): 83.

Per discutere sull'Eclettismo

Eclettico: (dal greco: ek fuori + legere scegliere, cogliere) 1) scegliere, selezionare da vari sistemi, dottrine o soggetti; adottare ai principi dell'eclettismo. 2) composto da materiali raccolti da vari sistemi, di varia origine ecc... (Webster's New World Dictionary)

Eclettico: 1) selezionare, scegliere da varie sorgenti. 2) fatto di ciò che è stato selezionato tra cose di diversa origine. 3) che non segue alcun sistema della filosofia, della medicina ecc... e invece sceglie e usa ciò che considera il meglio di ogni sistema. (The American College Dictionary)

Eclettico: 4) che denota o appartiene a opere di architettura, decorazione, paesaggio ecc... prodotte da una certa persona in un certo periodo, scegliendo in un ampio spettro di stili del passato, essendo la scelta ogni volta generata da una sua obliqua corrispondenza alla tradizione locale, ai caratteri geografici del luogo, allo scopo che si vuole perseguire o alle inclinazioni culturali del committente. (The Random House Dictionary of English Language)

Eclettico: 1) Di quella filosofia che non accetta nessuna vera dottrina, ma da varie prende i principi che le paiono più probabili, e questi commette alla meglio, senza che un principio unico sorregga su di tutta la ragione e la vita. 2) Chi eclettico, ove il doveroso giudicare dal nome che a si impongono, si dovrebbe una gente di memoria e non di ingegno. (Niccolò Tommaseo, *Dizionario della lingua italiana*)

Eclettismo: nella filosofia o nella teologia è la procedura di selezionare dottrine da diversi sistemi di pensiero senza mai interamente adottare l'intero sistema dal quale ogni dottrina è stata derivata... Nella sfera del pensiero astratto l'eclettismo è esposto all'obiezione che, poiché si suppone che ogni sistema sia in tutto coerente e che ciascuna delle sue dottrine sia una sua parte integrale, l'arbitraria giustapposizione di dottrine appartenenti a diversi sistemi, facilmente risulta in una fondamentale incoerenza. Questa tendenza si manifesta più naturalmente quando sistemi consolidati cominciano a perdere la loro novità o a rivelare le loro lacune attraverso cambiamenti di circostanze storiche o a causa di scoperte scientifiche. (Encyclopædia Britannica)

Sistemi consolidati

Capitalismo: un sistema secondo il quale i mezzi di produzione e gli scambi sono in larga misura posseduti e indirizzati da privati. (The American College Dictionary)

Socialismo: una teoria o sistema di organizzazione sociale che avoca la proprietà e il controllo del mezzo di produzione, del capitale, della terra ecc... alla collettività. (The American College Dictionary)

Democrazia: governo del popolo; una forma di governo in cui il potere appartiene al popolo, che lo esercita direttamente o attraverso delegati eletti attraverso liberi elezioni. (The American College Dictionary)

Libera iniziativa: dottrina economica e politica secondo la quale un'economia capitalistica può regolare se stessa, col minimo di interventi e regolamenti governativi, seguendo le relazioni tra domanda e offerta che si sviluppano nella competizione del mercato. (The Random House Dictionary of English Language)

Pianificazione: un metodo per influenzare o possibilmente controllare il futuro desenvolvendo o indirizzando le tendenze del presente secondo le relazioni tra domanda e offerta che si sviluppano nella competizione del mercato. Una perdita di credibilità sta erodendo i sistemi che sono stati denunciati manichéi e onniceti che si sta per elevare.

Libertà: si riferisce all'assenza di restrizioni illegittime e alla possibilità di esercitare i propri diritti e poteri. (The American College Dictionary)

Progresso: sviluppo della scienza, tecnologia, ecc., con speciale riferimento all'espansione di scambi commerciali che ne deriva, o all'incremento del benessere materiale attraverso la moltiplicazione di beni, servizi, servizi che ne consegue. (The Random House Dictionary of English Language)

Ordine: stato di pace e serenità. (Webster's New World Dictionary) Condizione di corrispondenza, stato di appropriata, tranquillità pubblica, pace quiete. (Sordani's Dictionary of English Synonyms)

Disciplina: addestramento che sviluppa l'autocontrollo, carattere, oppure ordine e efficienza. (Webster's New World Dictionary)



L'editoriale della rivista americana «Progressive Architecture», n. 9 del settembre scorso, informava che il Postmodernismo sta per finire e a riprova che la vita come sempre continua presentava una dozzina di progetti di una nuova corrente chiamata Neomodernismo. Era inevitabile - diceva l'editoriale - che il Postmodernismo morisse giovane perché risultava affetto da moderno come il quale, poco più di dieci anni fa, si era levato con riprovazione e dispetto.

Il Neomodernismo invece promette di essere assai più longevo perché di idealismo non ha alcuna traccia e al contrario è «pragmatico», nel senso che inclina a riconoscere quanto c'era di buono nel Movimento moderno dopo averne valutato se non le cause per le quali gli effetti, se non le strutture espressive per lo meno i reperti linguistici.

Di «idealismo» si muore, uno sarebbe portato a concludere subito. Ma poi viene la curiosità di capire di che sorta di malattia si tratta. A prima vista la sua designazione appare sventata, come a volte accade quando ci si imbatte in quelle scorciatoie colloquiali che gli americani spesso usano per rendere concreti

all'istante, e quindi largamente divulgabili, concetti che gli europei con fatica di secoli hanno sospeso ai livelli più astratti. Ma se si ricorre a *Random House* - uno dei dizionari Usa più autorevoli - si vede come nel territorio delle arti figurative sia definito idealismo: il trattamento che si impone al soggetto rappresentato per realizzare una particolare concezione mentale della bellezza o della forma; trattamento che in genere consiste nel selezionare figure appartenenti a modelli diversi per ricomporre in configurazioni corrispondenti a una idea predefinita di perfezione. E allora viene in mente il vecchio *Dizionario della lingua italiana* del sempre sorprendente Niccolò Tommaseo, che nel 1860 alla stessa voce osservava di passaggio: «l'eclettismo... tiene dell'idealismo...».

È dunque di eclettismo che mucchio e anche nascono - per ogni morte, tante effimere nascite - le correnti, le famiglie, le ganghe, dell'architettura contemporanea.

A tracciare un bilancio delle morti e delle nascite si dedica Charles Jencks in un esente saggio nel n. 53 della rivista inglese «Architectural Design», da lui redatto per intero e dedicato alla Rappresentazione astratta.

Jencks è un genio della scategorizzazione - è detto nel prologo pubblicitario del numero - e infatti nel suo saggio, e nel miriade di presentazioni che lo seguono, categorizza tutto e tutti con abilità sorprendente. Scaltro che dopo le tante acquisite degli anni passati, gli sta arrivato il momento di misurarsi con il grande affresco.

Le correnti registrate sono molte e gli adepti in proporzione sono pochi; per cui capita che qualche corrente non abbia più di due o tre adepti il più delle volte uno solo. Può capitare perfino che un adepti compaia in due o più correnti allo stesso tempo e allora il lavoro di collocazione diventa complesso, non solo per la difficoltà di identificazione che insorgono ma anche perché, se il collocatore è anche capo-corrente, si trova a non sapere più

L'eclettismo dei tenenti americani

The American lieutenants' eclecticism

G.D.C.

The editorial of «Progressive Architecture» (n. 9, Sept. 1982) reports that Post-Modernism is petering out and to show that life still goes on it carries a dozen or so projects from a new current called Neo-Modernism. The editorial says Post-Modernism just had to die young because it was infected by an even more acute form of idealism than that of the Modern Movement which it had once taken to task so fiercely, a little over ten years back.

We're given to understand that Neo-Modernism promises to be no flash in the pan just because it lacks the least trace of idealism; on the contrary, it's pragmatic, i.e. ready to take over whatever is good in the Modern Movement after appraising its effects, if not its causes, its vocabulary, if not its linguistic structures.

«Idealism» is a killer, or so one is led to conclude at first blush. But then comes the itch to try and see just what sort of ailment it is. At first sight the term seems to have been thrown out at random, as sometimes happens when one comes across those colloquial short cuts Americans so often use to make an idea immediately concrete and so widely assimilable - ideas that Europeans have laboriously raised to the highest abstract levels through the centuries. But a glance at the *Random House Dictionary* shows that for them idealities in the Fine Arts means treating the subject matter represented in such a way as to stress a mental conception of beauty or form, usually characterized by the selection of particular features of various models and their combination into a whole according to a standard of perfection. At which point one is reminded of the remarkable insights still to be found in Niccolò Tommaseo's old Italian Dictionary, which under the same entry notes in passing, «eclecticism draws on idealism (l'eclettismo tiene dell'idealismo...)». So it's actually eclecticism that regularly kills off the various currents, families, gangs etc. of contemporary archite-

In view of all this, including the open nature described above, *Spazio e Società* avoided presenting itself as a simple trade publication, to the point of assuming almost a "generalist" profile, to be read as an interpreter of the general crisis of those years when the structures and utopias of the previous decade had fallen, manifesting a desire to mirror the uncertainty of the moment and more in line with an international focus that became evident from the moment it was decided to publish in two languages.

Debate: pluralism of language and new proposals for urban planning

Despite the aforementioned lack of a very clear statement of content, based on what has been stated so far some key topics discussed in the journal can be identified, in tune with the cultural climate of the 1970s and 1980s, a transitional period when some of the topics underlying the previous decade (social radicalism, utopia) had evolved and others that would dominate the following decade (the emergence of post-Modernism as a "style" and the evolution of mass society) took shape.

Referring to the two cases described above, the first illustrates a theory, the second builds the space within which to carry out a critical process²⁴. At the assembly that Rossi would present at the following Triennale of 1973, De Carlo²⁵ in the previous one, a fusion of languages not to be interpreted as a new "eclecticism"²⁶ that instead was identified as post-Modern code.

24 See Paola Nicolini, *Castelli di carte. La XIV Triennale di Milano, 1968* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2011), 70-74.

25 The exhibition entitled *Il grande numero* was not inaugurated due to student protests. For more on the exhibition, see the exhaustive text mentioned above.

26 See Giancarlo De Carlo, "Per discutere sull'eclettismo," *Spazio e Società* 17 (March 1982): 62-67 and Giancarlo De Carlo, "L'eclettismo dei tenenti americani," *Spazio e Società* 25 (March 1984), 4-9. [Fig. 4-5]. See also Giancarlo De Carlo, "Beyond Postmodernism", preface to C. Richard Hatch, *The Scope of Social Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold International, 1984).

Fig. 4

G. De Carlo, "Per discutere sull'eclettismo," *Spazio e Società* 17, (1982): 62-67.

Fig. 5

G. De Carlo, "L'eclettismo dei tenenti americani," *Spazio e Società* 25, (1984): 4-9.

Through *Spazio e Società* the Genoese architect focused an interest on the manifestation of this phenomenon directed not so much at “showing its resounding superficial manifestations...but instead at orienting the discussion towards the causes that make them possible and the consequences that they produce,²⁷” and considers it based on an ideological system that is even stronger than that which supported Modernism, as demonstrated by Charles Jenks’ “categorisation”²⁸ of postmodern eclecticism. They adapted to the capture of the new “princes”, the mass-media, through a system of mixing words in an exercise of mere language that “neglects the spatial reality of the building”²⁹. The same line was also supported by the position of Jacob Bakema³⁰, who emphasised the need to create “configurations” that require “dialectical effort fatigue with the events of society³¹,” expressions of pluralistic decision-making nodes that were no longer centralised. Instead of a repetitive and identifiable code, the answer to the “total urbanisation”³² imposed by modernity, according to the Dutch architect, required an extension of language rather than formal simplification.

Engaging in the usual dialectic that followed the publication of a critical contribution, Ludovico Quaroni³³ [Fig. 6], responding to Bakema’s article, posed a key problem for the journal’s entire editorial programme, wondering if architectural and artistic culture had achieved equilibrium following recent socio-politically convulsive and dramatic decades. This was the proposal of the “Trendy priests”³⁴ who, according to Quaroni, deviate from the search for a correspondence between the linguistic system and social content by accentuating a figurative system. More interesting, according to the Roman architect, was another line of thought that could instead be represented by those who believe that there is no cyclicity and a unique relationship between social contexts and their representation, but that the causes that determine socio-political changes are the same that produce (or do not produce) progress in the artistic and architectural fields. It followed that the development of Italian architecture, but also that of other countries, had been largely detached from social and political events, and had been determined more by a desire for personal affirmation, as is the case, in his



27 Giancarlo De Carlo, “Editoriale,” *Spazio e Società* 14 (June 1981).

28 The author refers to the essay by Charles Jenks, published in the journal *Progressive Architecture* in issue 9 of 1983.

29 De Carlo, “L’eclettismo dei tenenti americani”: 9.

30 Jaap Bakema, “Dalla funzionalità dell’uso alla funzionalità creativa,” *Spazio e Società* 2, (April 1978): 75-84.

31 Heres Jedece, “Le vie dell’architettura sono davvero finite”, *Spazio e Società* 2, (April 1978): p. 86.

32 Jaap Bakema, “Dalla funzionalità dell’uso alla funzionalità creativa”: 78.

33 Ludovico Quaroni, “Una pericolosa tendenza,” *Spazio e Società* 2 (April 1978): 87-90.

34 *Ivi*: 87.

Fig. 6

L. Quaroni, “Una pericolosa tendenza,” *Spazio e Società* 2, (1978): 87-90.

Umbilicus mundi

Caro Giancarlo, confesso di trovarmi in imbarazzo di fronte al tuo gentile invito a rispondere alla recensione di Aquiles Gonzales al mio libro *Venezia e il Rinascimento*. Chi scrive dovrebbe forse tacere di fronte a critiche, equivoci, opinioni diverse: per evitare ogni forma di pettoleozio, innanzi tutto, ma anche per lasciare libero il proprio testo nel suo percorso. D'altra parte, anche una recensione è un testo che presuppone mentalità in genere legate ad ambienti che trascendono il suo autore: in quanto tale, essa si espone a una volta a critiche e a considerazioni storiche. Cercherò pertanto di esaminare lo scritto del mio recensore mettendo il più possibile fra parentesi il mio libro: un libro, d'altronde, che non sembra aver interessato Aquiles Gonzales, dato che egli rinuncia a confrontarsi con il suo contenuto. Le uniche cose che sembrano scaturire a cuore al recensore sono le *intese* e la cosiddetta specificità dell'architettura. Ed è in questa ultima che egli insiste: la storia — l'unica che vale la pena di scrivere, quella degli uomini — è fuori del suo campo di interessi. Perché mai, allora, prende in mano e sceglie di occuparsi di un testo storico? Quelli che per Aquiles Gonzales sono semplici "nomi" che rendono complessa e accidentata la narrazione sono i soggetti delle mie analisi. La loro contraddittorietà è analoga a quella che caratterizza tutti i mortali, e sarebbe ben strano che le loro azioni si risolvessero in

storie prive di equivoci. La Serenissima repubblica è paradigmatizzata in tal senso: il mio interesse per la sua storia è dovuto a tale caratteristica, che permette di far emergere — per antitesi — il significato delle opinioni cui Venezia resiste, che assorbe, che deforma. Né dovrebbe essere necessario ribadire che una storia è un testo — non gli sdoganamenti di Bloch, Febvre, Furet ecc. — è sempre storia di intrecci fra storie storicamente tradizionalmente separate per rigidità, per ignoranza, per semplicità più o meno colpevole. Esattamente come avviene nelle nostre storie personali: una volta che decidiamo di compiere severe autoanalisi. Sono dunque meravigliato — ma non tanto, infine — delle rivendicazioni di Aquiles Gonzales: un discorso sull'architettura *justo sua principia*, è basta. Non si tratta, forse, della più limitata scelta storiografica che la mia meraviglia si attenga) che molti architetti hanno un culto particolare per il proprio lavoro, e per il loro autocompietimento, essi rischiano di continuo di scambiare il loro particolare anatomico per l'antropologia. Non vedo, pertanto, per quale ragione uno storico dovrebbe compiacersi in tale loro vizio: anche se non è detto che quel vizio non sia funzionale alla loro spesso nobile *mania*. Sorvolo, pertanto, sul fatto che il mio recensore si permetta di ignorare la costruzione del mio libro e le sue finalità (il sottotitolo *Religione, scienza, architettura* è evidentemente privo di

significato per lui). Lo lascio quindi libero di cercare ricette di cucina in un trattato di chimica organica. Piuttosto, ritengo sintomatico che, una volta di più, chi difende con tanto accanimento la specificità dell'architettura si dimostri tanto incapace di leggerla. Il fatto che Aquiles Gonzales non sappia individuare nel foglio sanoviviano dei Corner novità spaziali e "invenzioni" è tipico. Non mi rimane che rinviare all'analisi "specificità" da me tenuta di quel foglio; cfr. il "Bollettino dei Civici Musei Veneziani" del 1981 (peraltro citato in nota), raccomandandogli anche lo studio delle mie agiografie in "Arte Veneta" 1987. Ma anche le sue lettere dei palazzi Corner e Grimani mi lasciano perplesso: sarebbero tali notazioni generici e scontati esempi di analisi specifiche? Non vorrei tuttavia essere frainteso. Come affermo di continuo non credo ad alcun determinismo. *Prima* di ogni intreccio storico è necessaria l'analisi delle componenti, e l'architettura non sfugge a tale necessità. Non a caso, il recensore spagnolo non parla delle opere da me riscosse, per chi chiamiamo in quanto progettista, a decidere? Come evitare, d'altronde, lo scoglio della famosa *Inattuale* di Nietzsche sulla storia? Mi sembra giusto chiedere la mia lettera con tali interrogativi, la cui problematicità non va, a mio parere, ridotta. Sapendo che essi non li sono estranei, ti saluto con la stima di sempre.

Manfredo Tafuri



Dear Giancarlo, I confess to some embarrassment over your courteous invitation to reply to Aquiles Gonzales' review of my book, *Venezia e il Rinascimento*. An author ought really to keep quiet about criticism, misunderstandings, and conflicts of opinion, firstly in order to avoid any kind of gossip, but also to leave his book free to speak for itself. Anyway, even a review is a text, which expresses points of view shared by circles that go beyond its author, and as such it is likewise liable to criticism and historical appraisal. So I shall try to examine the review by keeping my book as far as possible out of view: it does not seem to have in-

terested Aquiles Gonzales much anyway, since he refuses to go into its contents. The only thing the reviewer really seems to care about are the *syntheses* and the so-called *specificity of architecture*. And it is the latter on which he insists: history — the only history that matters, that of the individual — is outside his field of interest. So why did he choose to review a text dealing with history? What Aquiles Gonzales sees merely as "names", which chequer and complicate the narrative, are the subjects of my analyses. Their lack of consistency is analogous to that which characterizes all mortals, and it would be odd if their actions were free from ambiguities. The Serenissima Republica, epitom-

izes this fact. My interest in the history of Venice is due to this very feature, which brings out — by antithesis — the significance of the opinions which Venice opposed, absorbed or distorted. And it should not be necessary to reassert that any real history — after Bloch, Febvre, Furet etc. — is always a history of interweavings between historical records that are traditionally kept separate out of laziness, ignorance or more or less blameworthy oversimplification. Just as it happens with our personal histories, when we decide to subject ourselves to a severe self-examination. So I am surprised — though, at bottom, not greatly — at Aquiles Gonzales' desire to discourse on architecture *justo*

sua principia and no more. Is it not this about the most restrictive choice as a way of writing history? I know well enough — and this is why my astonishment is limited — that many architects have a special cult for their own *manes*: born in self-contemplation, they continually risk mistaking their own *manes* for the *umbilicus mundi*. But I can not see why a historian should indulge with a vice. Though it is not impossible it might serve the purposes of their often commendable *mania*. So I shall overlook the fact that the reviewer can afford to ignore the construction of my book and its aims (the subtitle, *Religione, scienza, architettura*, apparently means nothing to him). I'll leave him free to search for cake-

recipes in a treatise on organic chemistry. Instead, I feel it is symptomatic that once again a person fiercely defending the specificity of architecture should prove so incapable of understanding it. The fact that Aquiles Gonzales fails to find spatial innovation and "inventions" in Sansovino's drawing of the Correr is typical. All I can do is to refer him to the "specific" analysis of that very drawing which I attempted in the *Bollettino dei Civici Musei Veneziani*, 1981 (cited in Rocco or the church of the Misericordia, the Procuratie Nuove, etc. He died, instead, on an introductory theme, the partisan outlook in regard to the *renouveau*, the urban mystique, and private and state symbolism.

Let me not be misunderstood though. As I say more than once, I do not accept any kind of determinism. Any historical interweaving needs to be preceded by an analysis of its components, and architecture is no exception to this requirement. It is no accident that the Spanish reviewer does not mention the works I have reconstructed in their laborious realization, like the church of San Martino, the Scuole Grandi di San Rocco or the church of the Misericordia, the Procuratie Nuove, etc. He died, instead, on an introductory theme, the partisan outlook in regard to the *renouveau*, the urban mystique, and private and state symbolism.

Without any interest in such questions, he seeks to offer his own "recipe", which to my (perhaps over-laudious) palate savour of stalesness. This is not in itself serious. The long-standing conflict between history and architecture is apparent again in Gonzales' article, which has consisted — apart from its intrinsic interest — a symptomatic text. Fortunately *Space of Society* is a review which resists the senseless croaking of recent architectural writing, that thrives on themes like "memory", "the rediscovery of history", "paradises regained" and other such garbage. There is no greater hypocrisy — and here I feel we agree — than that which surfs its mouth with historical references in order

to give away to one's own professional cynicism. But there exist many different forms of oblivion and hence my reaction to one of them, which is not characteristic of my career review alone. This open letter of mine can serve as a warning, on which discussion remains open. In fact, how can people who are called on to make decisions — like architects — avoid "forgetting"? How can one avoid the hurdle of the "antimyth", of Nietzsche on history? It seems to me only right to close this letter with questions like this, whose difficulties, I feel, ought not to be underrated. I know that you are similarly concerned with them. All the best.

Manfredo Tafuri

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opinion, of "neo-rationalists" whose formal and graphic work believes, or wants people to believe, that it interprets a "socialist solidity"³⁵.

Between the late 1970s and the mid-1980s³⁶, eclecticism must be recognised as a multiplicity of languages³⁷, a pluralism of points of view and multidisciplinary contributions. In this, De Carlo's opinion seems to coincide with what Manfredo Tafuri states³⁸ [Fig. 7] in his only article in the magazine, according to which history is a series of interwoven analyses of the components, of which architecture is one but not exclusive. Hence the continuous interest in broadening the horizons and expanding contacts with correspondents from the various continents — a work that was rarely done so systematically in Italian publishing — to better understand architecture in developing countries³⁹ and post-colonialism [Fig. 8-9]. The latter was approached from an exquisitely urbanistic point of view, for the opportunities it provided to propose case studies for measuring the expansion of the dimension of urbanisation due to the new forms of capitalist colonisation that repropo-

35 Ivi: 90.

36 Period in which a detachment occurs between the historian and the critic, Carlo Olmo, "Tra impegno e racconto: una generazione di storici al lavoro", *Zodiaco* 21 (1999): 18.

37 See, as developed in parallel with the early years of the journal in the ILAUD laboratories, *The multiplicity of language vs Eclectism* (Ilaud Year Book, Firenze: Sansoni, 1983).

38 Manfredo Tafuri, "Mundi," *Spazio e Società* 40 (October-December 1987): 110-111. Again in the dialectical form with which the magazine engaged in discussion, the text is a comment on Aquiles Gonzales's review of the book by Tafuri, *Venezia e il Rinascimento, religione, scienza, architettura* (Torino, Einaudi: 1985) There is a certain analogy of method, but the architect was quite distant from socialist realism and the possibility that this could provide examples of spatial construction of society.

39 Some issues of the journal addressed the systematic treatment of the realities of the various countries, occupying a large part of the editorial space in the form of "Dossiers": Argentina (33), Uruguay (35), Venezuela (39), Hong Kong (79) as well as much discussion about Brazilian, Colombian and Chilean architecture. Other countries of interest included those in the Maghreb (Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria), the Far East (China, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia) and Africa (Burkina Faso, Angola, South Africa). India was often discussed by leading architects, in particular Balkrishnas Doshi.

Fig. 7
M. Tafuri, "Umbilicus Mundi," *Spazio e Società* 40, (1987): 110-111.



imported, bureaucratized models of Western societies⁴⁰. The experience of architecture in the Third World countries then had to be considered in the possibility of offering examples and solutions that were somewhat comparable or, in some cases, applicable to more developed contexts. Moreover, attention to the realities of these countries could be considered as a new opposition to the new internationalisation proposed by postmodernism, which was opposed to pluralism in a cosmopolitan key and strongly focused on local and regional culture. As a further step in this direction, to this was added the choice of non-traditional experiences, “out of the loop...and cultural operators who do not declare themselves architects”⁴¹, “alternative” forms of self-construction, misappropriation of spaces⁴², emergency housing solutions, widely present in the magazine’s pages.

From the point of view of internationalisation and interest in contemporary proposals on the form and theory of urban form, *Spazio e Società* stands as the natural continuation of De Carlo’s previous editorial project, the direction of the series *Struttura e forma urbana*⁴³ on behalf of the publishing house Il Saggiatore of Alberto Mondadori. The interest for urban planning that is not only regulatory or formalist that leads him, on the one hand to the rediscovery of certain texts, particularly of

40 See Luciano Barbero, Athina Savvidu, “Architettura e neocolonialismo,” *Spazio e Società* 1 (January 1978): 27-66. See also Roberto Costa, “Sul neo-colonialismo,” *Spazio e Società* 17 (March 1982): 85-98.

41 Giancarlo De Carlo, “Editoriale,” *Spazio e Società* 1 (January 1978): 4.

42 See the author’s interest and closeness to personalities such as Colin Ward and John F.C. Turner.

43 De Carlo’s contacts for the inclusion of the volume *Architettura e rivoluzione* by Anatole Kopp in the series, which never materialised, were behind the approach to the French architect and urban planner and to the magazine *Espaces et Sociétés*. De Carlo directed the series from 1967 to 1981, publishing 24 issues when only 16 had been planned. See Giancarlo De Carlo, “Tra tanti libri di architettura,” in *Gli anni ‘60: intellettuali e editoria*, ed. Franco Brioschi (Conference proceedings. Milan 7-8 May 1984, Milano: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 1987): 107-113; Fiorella Vanini, 6. “Giancarlo de Carlo e ‘Struttura e forma urbana,’” in *La libreria dell’architetto. Progetti di collane editoriali 1945-1980*, ed. Fiorella Vanini (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2012): 99-115; Antonio Clemente, “Letture dimenticate,” in *A partire da Giancarlo De Carlo*, ed. Federico Biò (Roma: Gangemi, 2007): 161-169.

Fig. 8
R. Costa, “Sul neo-colonialismo,” *Spazio e Società* 17, (1982): 85-98.

Fig. 9
“Dossier”: Argentina,” *Spazio e Società* 33, (1985).



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an Anglo-Saxon culture, absent from the Italian debate thus far⁴⁴, and on the other, to drawing closer to the contemporary urban planners: Christopher Alexander, Serge Chermayeff, Alexander Tzonis and Kevin Lynch⁴⁵ sensitive to the contamination of the discipline with social, anthropological and natural sciences and the introduction of participatory practices in the planning. The author's connection with American culture⁴⁶ solidified thanks to the ongoing presence of the above and other authors on the journal's pages, and through the establishment of an effective editorial staff parallel and independent to the MIT⁴⁷, composed of Julian Beinart as editor-in-chief, Antonio Di Mambro and Edward Robbins [Fig. 10-12].

Debate: from the Modern Movement to Post-Modern. Environment, architecture and power

The rethinking of some key elements of the Modern Movement that in recent years, compared to the 1950s⁴⁸, have led to a change in perspective, adapting to the debate of the moment, allows us to frame other topics debated in the journal.

44 See: Ludwing Hilberseimer, *La natura della città* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1969); Clarence Stein, *Verso nuove città per l'America* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1969); Patrick Geddes, *Città in evoluzione* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1970).

45 See the texts published in the series: Christopher Alexander, *Note sulla sintesi della forma* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1967); Christopher Alexander and Serge Chermayeff, *Spazio di relazione e spazio privato (Relationship and Private Space)*, 1968; Serge Chermayeff and Alexander Tzonis, *La Forma dell'ambiente costruito* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1971); Robert Unwin, *La pratica della progettazione urbana* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1971); Robert Goodman, *Oltre il piano* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1973); Kevin Lynch, *Il tempo dello spazio* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1977); Kevin Lynch, *Il senso del territorio* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1981). *Spazio e Società* dedicated the cover of the "American" issue of June 1984 to the architect who passed away in April of that same year. See Giancarlo De Carlo, "Omaggio a Kevin Lynch," *Spazio e Società* 26, (June 1984): 2. Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1981).

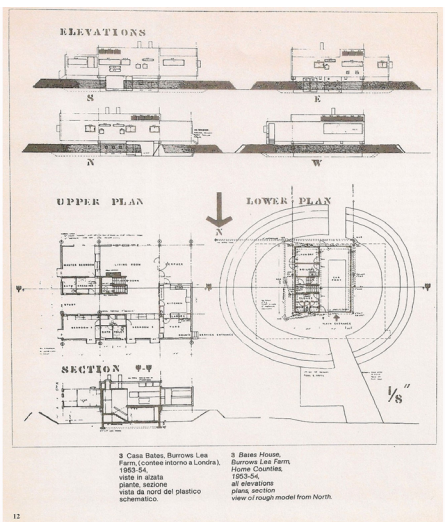
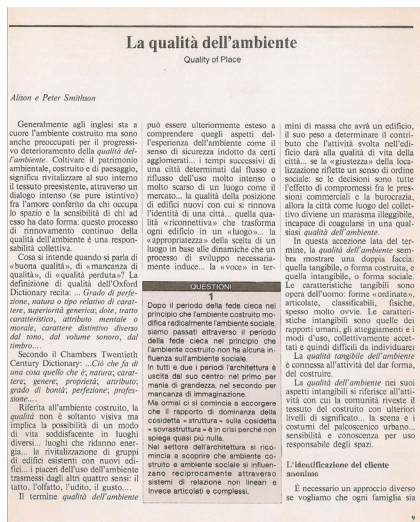
46 The first contacts with MIT date back to 1967, when De Carlo was contacted by Kevin Lynch, Henry Millon and Maurice Smith. Donlyn Lyndon, "Giancarlo De Carlo in the US," in *Giancarlo De Carlo. Percorsi*, ed. Francesco Samassa (Venice: Il Poligrafo, 2004): 47-58.

47 The issues completely edited by the American editorial team are no. 18 of 1982, no. 22 of 1983 and no. 26 of 1984: with further contributions from members of the editorial team including William Blake, Reyner Banham, John Ackerman, Michael Sorkin, Robert Gutman and John Turner. Architecture and American urbanism are also the subject of previous issues: nos. 7, 10 and 12.

48 De Carlo participated in this process from within the Italian architectural culture. Consider for example the volume on William Morris for the publisher Il Balcone, Milan, 1947. Externally he participated through Team X. Many members of the group would contribute to the pages of the magazine.

Fig. 10-12

Spazio e Società – *Space & Society* 18, (1982) – 22 (1983) – 26 (1984).



The first idea was based on two articles published by A+P Smithson in 1976 and 1978⁴⁹ [Fig. 13-14], significantly also called upon to open the new course of that year.

The first highlights the emergence of a “romantic” turn in the architecture of the late 1970s, where it is possible to recognise some aspects that the Modern Movement had instead wanted to abandon, such as: nature, history, the complexity of interwoven spaces determined by the relationship between places and denied societies in favour of a rigid schematism, the domestication of technology, the reliance on form as an expression of quality without ending in formalism and the enucleation of architecture as a space for human events, abandoning the utopias of large-scale architecture promoted during the 1960s.

Thus were clarified some fundamental terms for the Modern Movement, of particular importance in particular for Italian culture, such as the concept of “environment”, which turned towards new sensitivities determined by the reaction to the conditions of degradation produced by territorial development and the result of a new environmentalism that was also in part of American origin.⁵⁰ Hence the renewed interest in the conservation of historic city centres and the initiation of a discussion of the “new” industrial archaeology necessary for the recovery of abandoned areas, issues to which the journal devoted ample space.

Commenting on the considerations of the Smithson spouses in the aforementioned article in the 1978 inaugural issue, Francesco Dal Co⁵¹ [Fig. 15] identifies how the need for a link between identity and space evoked by English architects

49 A+P Smithson, “Alla ricerca di un nuovo lirismo”; A+P Smithson, “La qualità dell’ambiente,” *Spazio e Società* 1, (January 1978): 9-26.

50 See Olmo, “Tra impegno e racconto: una generazione di storici al lavoro,” 12. Central in this regard was the interest in another personage of reference in American urbanism, Lewis Mumford. Giuliana Baracco was the first to translate *The culture of the cities* but never published it, the first Italian edition coming out in 1953, published by edizioni di Comunità. See Michela Rosso, Paolo Scrivano, “Introduzione,” in Lewis Mumford, *La cultura della città* (Torino: edizioni di Comunità, 1999), XXXVII.

51 Francesco Dal Co, “Desideri, tecniche, ambiente (intervento sulle questioni sollevate dall’articolo di A e P Smithson pubblicato sul numero 1 della rivista),” in *Spazio e Società* 3 (September 1978): 67-69.



Fig. 13

A+P Smithson, “Alla ricerca di un nuovo lirismo,” *Spazio e Società* 3, (1976): 7-16.

Fig. 14

A+P Smithson, “La qualità dell’ambiente,” *Spazio e Società* 1, (1978): 9-26.

Fig. 15

F. Dal Co, “Desideri, tecniche, ambiente (intervento sulle questioni sollevate dall’articolo di A e P Smithson pubblicato sul numero 1 della rivista),” *Spazio e Società* 3, (1978): 67-69.



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no longer refers to Rogersian phenomenological space and not even to the desire to create a comfortable new and “technological” relationship between man and context belonging to a certain utopia of the 1960s and 1970s. The environment that the architect must be able to build is the field where needs and desires intersect and find balance. What the Smithsons propose, on the other hand, is a return to the place as an individual space, “resolved”⁵², antagonist of the house for an “anonymous” client proposed by the Modern Movement, however little able to intervene and modify the mechanisms of power and modern production. One of the most significant “moments” in this regard is represented by the publication of Le Corbusier’s interview in Issue 6⁵³ in 1979 [Fig. 16]. Twelve years after the architect’s demise⁵⁴, the contribution’s tone seemed to adapt itself to the journal’s objectives as underlined in the comments to the text⁵⁵:

“a loose, unordered and finalized story, different and in its own way revealing. This time the spokespersons are no longer the architects, the industrialists, the academics as in *Vers une architecture*, but the ordinary acquirers of the disk to be inscribed”⁵⁶ “most extraordinary singularity of any utopia..., resulting from having surpassed the excesses of the same utopia”⁵⁷.

Among these, Kenneth Frampton⁵⁸ [Fig. 17], anticipating the publication of the introduction written for the double issue 19-20 of the *Oppositions*

52 Ivi: 67.

53 Le Corbusier, “Messaggio in una bottiglia. Un inedito,” *Spazio e Società* 6 (June 1979): 5-30.

54 De Carlo from the beginning worked on a critique of the Swiss master’s thought. See the anthology of the writings edited by him, Giancarlo De Carlo, *Le Corbusier* (Milano: Rosa & Ballo, 1947) and Le Corbusier, *Urbanistica* (Il Saggiatore: Milan, 1967) also edited by him for *Struttura e Forma urbana* in 1967. Then followed the tribute to the centenary of the architect’s death, Giancarlo De Carlo, “Omaggio a Le Corbusier,” *Spazio e Società* 40, (October-December 1987): 4-5.

55 See: “Discussioni. A proposito del ‘Messaggio’ di Le Corbusier,” *Spazio e Società* 8, (December 1979): 96-101, see the content in the same article of Giuseppe Samonà, Francesco Tentori and Alison Smithson.

56 Giuseppe Cinà, “Le Corbusier da giovane era più saggio,” “Discussioni. A proposito del ‘Messaggio’ di Le Corbusier”, 9.

57 Samonà, “Discussioni. A proposito del ‘Messaggio’ di Le Corbusier”, 99.

58 Kenneth Frampton, “Resta come la nemesi del nostro tempo,” “Discussioni. A proposito del ‘Messaggio’ di Le Corbusier”, 97-98.

Fig. 16
Le Corbusier, “Messaggio in una bottiglia. Un inedito,” *Spazio e Società* 6, (1979): 5-30.



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magazine edited by him on the master in 1980, from a certain temporal distance, seeking to avoid the risks of the sterile contemporary contrast between the post-modernists and the followers of militant modernism, to address it instead on more functional topics to a critique of the contemporary, of mass and bourgeois society and of the reduction of architecture to a commodity. According to the American historian, one of Le Corbusier's major contributions was that of having tried to tackle the titanic project of shaping the structure of the future bourgeois city and defining the cultural status of industrial objects. Le Corbusier's flaw was to have excessively extended Hausmanian urban planning instruments – and before that the Enlightenment matrix – to respond to the demands of the industrial capital between the two wars, first, and neo-capitalism from 1945. However:

“The anti-consumerist idea of the casual relationship between needs-type and objects-type...could not have been farther from the interests of capital.... Always waiting, like Charles Fourier, for the arrival of an enlightened prince or a technocrat magnate, Le Corbusier sought a patron who could not absolutely exist in capitalism⁵⁹”.

It is clear how the social outlook on the construction of space cannot be confined solely to a more or less forced adherence to ideological systems, but much more widely concerns architecture's relationship with power, in the broadest sense⁶⁰, another central theme of De Carlo's interests, of course, but which can also be

Fig. 17

“Discussioni. A proposito del “Messaggio” di Le Corbusier”, *Spazio e Società* 8, (1979): 96-101.

59 Ivi: 98.

60 See Alain Gouhier, “Il potere e i luoghi del potere”, *Espaces et Sociétés*, no. 2 (October 1975): 5-21. From this point of view we can consider, for example, the journal's interest in French public policies. On this, see again Giancarlo De Carlo, *L'architetto e il potere (The Architect and Power)*, op. cit.

considered as one of the many implications of the debate resulting from the criticism of postmodern culture. Franco Mancuso⁶¹ [Fig. 18] sheds light on a substantial immobility of architectural culture on this relationship, an aspect also emphasised by Giovanni Michelucci⁶² in his only contribution to the journal. While the problem of the Florentine architect is oriented towards objectives of more than an architectural nature, Mancuso's discourse starts from the observation of the absence of a genuine debate on the architecture-power relationship between the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, a debate which shies away from the continuous historical recollection of the events of the Fascist period. This inability is attributable to the lack of a traumatic and "dividing" event as was the Second World War and the Resistance, capable of starting a process of reflection without which it is impossible to make a critical review of what one is already experiencing or has recently experienced. Turning to Italian architecture, it is affected by the condition whereby:

"The fact that the current political and cultural conditioning has not changed much (many protagonists in the political and cultural scene are still in the front row, despite the passing of almost two generations), induces historians and critics to take a cautious stance, and militant architects to make blurred judgments on everyday problems⁶³".

A certain architectural tendency, therefore, seeks legitimacy in history for its monumental and formalist actions, still with an attitude that shies away from a genuine critique.

While these issues are directly relevant to academic culture, the debate on the journals, etc., as Mancuso points out, are disconnected from the real definition of the contemporary city's structure, and the difficulty of creating models is manifested at the moment in which the consolidation of public power is affirmed in all the processes that determine social relationships. Consequently, the response of the administration's practice is resolved with greater bureaucracy or by addressing architecture with a purpose that is often directed to provide immediate and simplified solutions, images for use by the mass media that produce the proliferation of occasions for competition, and conceptual or drawn



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61 Franco Mancuso, "L'architettura come gioco del potere (Architecture as a Power Game)," *Spazio e Società* 21, (March 1983): 94-99.

62 See Giovanni Michelucci, "Ordine e disordine", *Spazio e Società* 31-32, (September-December 1985): 87-89, text from an article that appeared in December of the previous year in no. 5 of "La nuova città".

63 *Ivi*: 94.

Fig. 18

F. Mancuso, "L'architettura come gioco del potere," *Spazio e Società* 21, (1983): 94-99.

or ephemeral design exercises⁶⁴ that have actually increased considerably since the 1980s and at least throughout the decade.

In this context, according to Mancuso, the expertise of the historian or critic increases his or her potential to influence the promotion of an architect, who in turn increases the production of images and drawings for publications in journals, monographs and so on, aspects which logically also affect the cultural orientations of architecture schools “that pass down stereotypes easy to assimilate and copy, and feeding on the cultural products touted by journals⁶⁵”. Mancuso’s proposals in opposition to this scenario offer, in conclusion, a revamped manifesto of *Spazio e Società*:

“Reject the seductions of formalistic complacency and bring architecture back to that desperate need of quality and efficiency which the daily space lived-in by the community requires; stop looking backwards and instead recover the enormous individual and collective energy that flows in the moments in which the built environment is created; observe with greater penetration capacity the ever-new and changing relationship between society and the built environment, and work for the reconciliation of architecture with the disciplines of the city⁶⁶”.

64 The reference is to the 1st International Biennale di Architettura by Paolo Portoghesi in 1980 and to the achievements of the *Strada Nuovissima* or of the *Teatro del Mondo* (*The Theatre of the World*).

65 Mancuso, “L’architettura come gioco del potere (Architecture as a Power Game),” 98.

66 *Ibidem*.