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Aleksi Lohtaja

Architecture as Spatial Configuration of Politics

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
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ABSTRACT

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The research examines the spatial configuration and reconfiguration of politics by bringing together intersections of political theory and architecture. Situated in the field of political science and theory, the study is interested in the consequences of attempting to understand architecture from the point of view of political theory and how it informs a broader theorization and conceptualization of what is politics.

The aim of the study is to expand the notion of politics to better include the conceptualizations of space, architecture, and the built environment. The study restores the problem of conceptualizing and theorizing politics in relation to architecture in the history of political thought. In particular, the study revisits the long-standing difficulty to theorize architectural politics that is not dependent on and determined by external political forces and existing social relations.

By approaching these theoretical and historical entanglements and disputes from new angles the research aims to move beyond the narrow conceptualization of *political architecture* present especially in political science and theory. In the study, political architecture refers to representations of external political ideologies and social relations through architecture. The research in general and the research articles in particular claim that such an understanding of politics is too narrow and suggest an alternative conceptualization: *architecture as spatial configuration of politics*. Understood in this way, architecture can be considered a process in which political ideologies, subjectivities, and compositions are not only materialized but also invented anew in new built forms.

The study suggests a renewed theoretical framework for a spatial configuration of politics and its relevance for architecture by discussing the political thought of Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre, and Jacques Rancière in particular. What the study attempts to show is that by analysing the intertwinement of architecture and politics in the writings of these authors, it is possible to conceptualize a renewed theoretical approach to architecture's status and position in existing social relations. For Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Rancière, social relations are both maintained and contested through the modifications of space and architecture. For them, space is not a neutral container or a mere background for political activity. Instead, the configuration of space is simultaneously a configuration of politics – of which architecture provides a good example.

Methodologically, the study belongs to the field of visual politics, which aims to understand visual culture, art, and architecture not only as representations of politics but political forces in themselves.

The dissertation consists of four research articles. Alongside the research articles, the dissertation includes an introductory part that examines previous scholarship and theoretical and methodological questions concerning approaches to studying architecture from the point of view of political theory.

KEYWORDS: ARCHITECTURE, POLITICS, POLITICAL ARCHITECTURE, SPACE AND POLITICS, BENJAMIN, LEFEBVRE, RANCIÈRE

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

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Tämä tutkimus käsittelee politiikan tilallista rakentumista tutkimusasetelmalla, jossa arkkitehtuuria lähestytään poliittisen teorian kautta. Tutkimuksen konteksti on politiikan tutkimus, erityisesti poliittinen teoria. Siten lähtökohtana ei ole arkkitehtuurin poliittisuus yksittäisten rakennusten kautta, vaan pikemminkin se, miten arkkitehtuurin kautta voidaan ymmärtää ja teoretisoida politiikkaa itsessään.

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on laajentaa käsitys politiikasta huomioimalla politiikan tilallinen ulottuvuus. Tutkimus kyseenalaistaa suorasukaisen tulkinnan *poliittisesta arkkitehtuurista* valtavirtaisena tapana käsitteellistää arkkitehtuurin poliittisuus erityisesti politiikan tutkimuksessa sekä poliittisessa teoriassa. Poliittisella arkkitehtuurilla viitataan tutkimuksessa arkkitehtuurille ulkoisten poliittisten ideologioiden ja yhteiskunnallisten suhteiden representaatioon arkkitehtuurin kautta. Tutkimus kokonaisuudessaan ja tutkimusartikkelit omien kysymyksenasetteluidensa kautta argumentoivat, että poliittisen arkkitehtuurin käsitys politiikasta on liian yksiulotteinen. Tutkimus esittää vaihtoehtoisen tavan tulkita arkkitehtuurin poliittisuus käsittelemällä arkkitehtuuria politiikan tilallisena konfiguraationa. Tästä lähtökohdasta arkkitehtuuri näyttäytyy prosessina, jossa erilaiset poliittiset ideologiat, subjektiviteetit ja kompositiot myös tuotetaan ja määritellään jatkuvasti uudelleen.

Tutkimuksen teoreettisen viitekehyksen muodostaa Walter Benjaminin, Henri Lefebvren sekä Jacques Rancièren poliittinen ajattelu. Ajattelijoita yhdistää käsitys siitä, että poliittinen muutos vaatii aina laajemman tilallisen muutoksen. Benjaminin, Lefebvren sekä Rancièren poliittisen ajattelun pohjalta tavoitteena on tutkia hypoteesia, jonka mukaan arkkitehtuuri on jatkuva prosessi, jossa käsitys politiikasta muodostuu yhteiskunnan eri osa-alueiden, toimijoiden ja käytäntöjen välillä. Tila, artikuloituna tässä tutkimuksessa ennen kaikkea arkkitehtuurin kautta, ei ole näille ajattelijoille ainoastaan muuttumaton alusta, jossa poliittinen toiminta tapahtuu. Tilan tuottaminen on pikemminkin politiikan tuottamista itsessään.

Menetelmällisesti tutkimus hyödyntää visuaaliseen politiikan tutkimukseen kuuluvia teoreettisia menetelmiä. Näitä menetelmiä hyödyntämällä tutkimus pyrkii ymmärtämään taiteen, kulttuurin ja arkkitehtuurin aktiivisesti politiikkaa tuottavina ja määrittävinä alueina sen sijaan, että niitä ajateltaisiin ulkoisten poliittisten representaatioiden kautta.

Tutkimus koostuu neljästä erillisestä tutkimusartikkelista sekä johdanto-osuudessa. Johdannossa tutkimus käsittelee aikaisempaa tutkimusta sekä teoreettisia ja metodologisia kysymyksiä liittyen arkkitehtuurin tutkimiseen poliittisen teorian näkökulmasta.

AVAINSANAT: ARKKITEHTUURI, POLITIIKKA, POLIITTINEN ARKKITEHTUURI, TILA JA POLITIIKKA, BENJAMIN, LEFEBVRE, RANCIÈRE

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Inspired by Alexander Rodchenko's notion of comradely objects, the dissertation is dedicated to the main building of the Jyväskylä University Library (1974) designed by Arto Sipinen. It is an understatement that the countless hours spent there changed my life. While it has always been an important space for me, ever since its planning, traditionalists and other reactionary voices have nevertheless claimed that such anonymous library for the masses is inadequate for the prestige academic institution and the aura of Bildung. Perhaps precisely due to these reasons, it is one of my favourite buildings.

Merihaka, Helsinki 10.5.2022
Aleksi Lohtaja

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ORIGINAL ARTICLES

1 INTRODUCTION

This work is a product of my long-standing interest in looking at architecture from theoretical, philosophical, and especially political points of view. In 2016, when the study took its earliest tentative plan, the 15th Venice Biennale of Architecture titled *Reporting from the Front* gained a lot of publicity. Curated by Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena, the biennale promoted an engaged and politicized discourse of architecture which was new especially to a broader public accustomed to so-called *starchitects*, curating good taste but rarely engaging with politics.[1] Against the representations of architecture as artistic practice isolated from society, Aravena proposed "to widen the range of issues to which architecture is expected to respond, adding explicitly to the cultural and artistic dimensions that already belong to our scope, those that are on the social, political, economical and environmental end of the spectrum" ("Biennale Architettura", 2016).

Aravena's curatorial choices reflect a broader politicization of architectural discourse over the past decade. Political engagement and activism related to the built environment has indeed been one of the defining themes of recent architectural discussion.[2] In the era of environmental disaster, global pandemics, and housing crises, even the most mainstream architecture seems to be political, socially engaged, and critical practice bearing the utopian promise that society can be changed by design.

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[1] The architects who have received significant media attention over the past few decades, such as Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Norman Foster, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind, and Zaha Hadid, have maintained that architecture should be detached from its ideological or political contexts. This, of course, does not mean that even starchitects are, despite their claims, above politics. Instead, the apolitical trope is common to the neoliberal era and its ideological currents. The neoliberal starchitect figure has, however, largely been replaced by more committed figure in recent years: even the most famous contemporary high-brand architects, such as Bjarke Ingels, are addressing seemingly ecologically and socially sustainable themes in their work.

[2] Florian Hertweck (2018, pp. 12–14) has outlined five trends in contemporary political architecture: 1. activism, 2. pragmatism, 3. architectural programming for societal development, 4. analytical approaches examining social problems and solutions in built forms, and 5. utopian narratives and narration through architecture.

The turn is evident in the explosions of architecture and design biennials, nominations and awards, new collective architectural offices and collectives, new publications, and educational programs loudly promoting the idea that architectural design can and should change society – a utopian idea that not so many decades ago was treated plainly as historical, outdated, and to some extent even a dangerous approach. For example, in 2021, the Pritzker prize was awarded to Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, known for their socially engaged and ecologically sustainable architectural practice. Aravena, a member of the Pritzker jury, took Lacaton and Vassal as signifying a broader contemporary political experience and architecture's role in responding to it: "This year, more than ever, we have felt that we are part of humankind as a whole. Be it for health, political or social reasons, there is a need to build a sense of collectiveness" ("World Architecture Community", 2021).

However, at the same time, when the politicization of architecture is little more than stating truism, we can identify the clear emergence of a theoretical trajectory claiming that the relationship between architecture and politics remains unclear (Zacka & Bell, 2020; Lahiji, 2019, Rockhill, 2014b; Kaminer, 2017). Under what conditions can architecture build a sense of political collectiveness? If there is a political project of architecture, whose project is it? If architecture aims to unify humankind as a whole, does that also render political distinctions obsolete?

Thus, the problem in addressing the political dimension of architecture is not only limited to what, for example, renowned architectural historian Kenneth Frampton has called the lack of politics in contemporary architectural practices (Frampton & Cairns, 2012), or what Jeremy Till calls the apolitical representation of the architectural profession independent from society (Till, 2009). Instead, the problem seems to be primarily somewhat instrumental and given the nature of the concept of politics and how it is framed in relation to architecture's social engagement and expected political efficiency. Ross Exo Adams has suggested: "To speak of 'politics' in this context has, in fact, become something of a cliché" (Adams, 2014, p. 181). Murray Fraser has stated in similar way that despite the politicized themes in architectural practices, "what is lacking are clear or coherent positions to adopt. In turn, this makes the formulation of an appropriate political strategy extremely difficult" (Fraser, 2016, p. vii).

It has even been suggested that the recent revival of politics in activist architecture often ultimately promotes an understanding of politics solely as an instrument for socio-political change, which in fact foreclosures the broader scope of politics and its contingent nature (Boano & Vergara Perucich, 2016; Lohtaja, 2019). Architectural theorist Pier-Vittorio Aureli has argued that projects emphasizing strong political advocacy in the form of architectural activism, for example, can be paradoxically considered as anti-political:

> The activist and participatory practices that are so popular today are the latest iterations of a reformist syndrome whose pathology is to preserve social and political conditions as they are. For example, much of the design rhetoric on sustainability is based on the dilemma between survival or extinction. Confronted with such a dilemma,

> which causes the bare state of the nature of humanity, the culture of architecture is forcefully invited to *do something*, to be *responsible*, and to find *a solution*. In other words, the rhetoric of sustainability eliminates a priori any possibility of a negative response. Within such rhetoric, we are condemned to optimism. (Aureli, 2013, p. 125)

By connecting contemporary socially and politically engaged architectural practices to the historical "reformist syndrome" of architecture, Aureli points out an important continuation of historical politically oriented architectural practices and contemporary forms of politicized architecture aiming for social transformation that might seem odd at first.[3]

However, the connection nevertheless reveals something interesting about architecture's position (even in its "utopian" forms) vis-à-vis existing social relations. As Aureli continues: "The history of urbanism and architecture has taught us that very often the idea of *a better world* is a deceptive way to preserve the *same* world in which we live" (Aureli, 2013, p. 126).

As such the problem of conceptualizing architectural politics is hardly new. Instead, perhaps more specifically we are once again facing a long-standing theoretical difficulty to conceptualize the relationship between architecture and politics that would not be dependent on external political forces and existing social relations (de Graaf, 2017). Is architecture a mere (reformist) instrument for external socio-political change or is there a more transformative element present in architecture? How can we think of political contingency, freedom and resistance through architecture, given that it is highly dependent on existing social relations, dominant forms of power, and access to financialization, being steered by policies of zoning and so forth?

The bulk of critical political thought and philosophy on architecture maintains that such conceptualization is practically impossible. According to Gabriel Rockhill:

> Much of contemporary critical philosophy, marked by the inheritance of the historical problematic of the relationship between high art and revolutionary politics, has indeed turned a blind eye to architecture in favor of meditating on the potential for the grand art of the bourgeoisie – and particularly individual works of fine art and literature – to contribute to social and political transformation. (Rockhill, 2014b, pp. 30–31)

[3] Reformism is a political approach that tries to bring about social and political change through existing institutions through a series of gradual evolvements. Especially in Marxist political thought, there has long existed a theoretical controversy over the concept of reformism and its relation to Eduard Bernstein's idea of the evolutionary path to socialism. Reformism was historically tied to early 20th century social-democratic movements that believed that the emancipation of the working class was eventually compatible with a regulated and directed capitalist economy, as well as the nation state's juridical-political institutions. Such social-democratic reformism can be traced also to architectural projects like Ernst May's Das Neue Frankfurt and the institutionalization of the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), which aims to find solutions to housing shortages and poor housing conditions. Following Tahl Kaminer's analysis, such reformism in modern architecture "foregrounded the social responsibilities of design and produced primarily mass social housing and planned cities" (Kaminer, 2017, p. 19). Here, the architectural reformism and its discontents will be further discussed especially in the article "Henri Lefebvre's Lessons from the Bauhaus".

If there is politics related to architecture, it is often limited to maintenance of power, order, and existing social relations rather than including transgression, subversion, contingency, and abolishment of the present state of things. Erik Swyngedouw tellingly suggests that "architecture cannot be an emancipatory project; it never was and never will be" (2016, p. 48). The status of architecture in (especially critical) political thought has indeed, at least implicitly, often been a critique of architecture (for key theoretical texts on the convergence of political theory and architecture, see, for example, Ockman, 1993; Leach, 1996; Hays, 2000; Ballantyne, 2005).[4]

Historically, of course, this problem is most evident in Manfredo Tafuri's seminal article "Toward a critique of architectural ideology" (2000, published originally in 1969), which has later become perhaps the most important single writing examining the problematic relationship between architecture and politics. For Tafuri there can be no inherently transformative political architecture understood as being capable of changing society beyond external social, political, and economic frameworks. Architecture might be steered by external political forces but architecture itself cannot be treated as politically transformative. Architecture might be a reformist tool for social renewal but not revolutionary in the more profound sense of the concept. Architecture might be ideological but not utopian in a sense that it can change society alone. Ultimately, "architecture as politics" is, as Tafuri later suggested, such "an exhausted myth that it is pointless to waste anymore words on it" (Tafuri, 1990, p. 8).

Alongside Tafuri, similar articulations of architecture and politics can be found more broadly in the history of "arts and politics" discourse (Rockhill, 2014a). Here one can pinpoint, for example, the status of architecture in the Frankfurt School's critical theory, which is often taken as a privileged theoretical approach for understanding the relationship between art and politics and especially the emancipatory potential of aesthetic activity (Adorno et al., 2007; Heynen, 1999; Schwartz, 2005). A common idea in the Frankfurt School is that the critical potentiality of art, its utopian function, resides in its capability to provide a counter-image of the existing society: a negation of the present. The thinkers of this tradition, such as Theodor W. Adorno, Ernst Bloch, Siegfried Kracauer, Herbert Marcuse, and Jürgen Habermas, all accept art's capability in general to function as a utopian force – to envision different worlds – but exclude architecture (with the exception of Benjamin, as we shall see) and instead consider it to be a "degenerate utopia" (Coleman, 2013).

For Adorno, architecture "is conditioned by a social antagonism over which the greatest architecture has no power: the same society which developed human productive energies to unimaginable proportions has chained them to conditions of production imposed upon them" (Adorno, 1997, p. 14). Comparably for Bloch, architecture cannot escape the actual conditions of society, given that "it is, far more than the other fine arts, a social creation" (Bloch, 1988, p. 188). Kracauer,

[4] According to Georges Bataille, for example, architecture "is the expression of every society's very being (…) The ideal being of society, the one that issues orders and interdictions with authority" (Bataille, cited in Hollier, 1989, p. ix).

originally trained as an architect, made a more ambiguous argument of the utopian possibility of the built environment, but ultimately in a similar way outlined that "every typical space is created by typical social relations" (Kracauer, 1995, p. 29). Herbert Marcuse, albeit not directly referring to architecture, later presented a revised argument on artistic autonomy in his *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (1977). For Marcuse, at a time when one-dimensional society expands into everything, art's critical vocation finds itself in autonomy and retreat – something that architecture by its nature cannot achieve. Ultimately, as Jürgen Habermas stated in his lecture on modern and postmodern architecture, it is evident that ultimately architecture cannot escape the current social relations in the same way as individual autonomous artworks and hence "found itself in a paradoxical situation"(Habermas, 2000, p. 421).

Such examples easily lead us to conceptualize the politics of architecture from a position in which form follows existing power relations, social relations, and the dominant mode of production. As architecture finds its political realization only in the present society, it ends up – as, for example, Adorno and Tafuri have pointed out – in a paradoxical situation: its political agency is restricted by the existing society and economic framework.

The historical trajectory of this is easy to assess from multiple different perspectives. Modernist and avant-gardist architecture in Soviet Russia and Weimar Germany attempting to change society through design soon became integrated into state capitalist and state socialist reforms (Tafuri, 1976). In a similar way, experimental architecture in the 1960s and 1970s, inspired by the spirit of 1968 and anti-statist themes such as self-organization, situations, and refusal of work, soon became recuperated by the new spirit of capitalism (Kaminer, 2011; see also Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999). And perhaps the contemporary notion of architectural activism, sustainability, and participatory practices, such as tactical urbanism, confetti urbanism, and urban commons, pose not only a radical alternative to austerity urbanism and the privatization of public space but also comprise an integral part of it. After all, doing more with less is precisely what contemporary capitalism demands from us (Aureli, 2013).

But is it necessary to accept such notions, or could there be politics embedded in architecture that would take another position vis-à-vis existing social relations as well? Can architecture be considered politically transformative itself or is it – as, for example, Tafuri's and Adorno's positions seem to lead – merely dependent on political forces and social relations ultimately external to architecture itself?

In this work, this question is examined especially by making inquiries into the political thought of Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre, and Jacques Rancière in particular. What the study attempts to show is that by analysing the intertwinement of architecture and politics in the writings of these authors, it is possible to conceptualize a renewed theoretical approach to architecture's status and position in existing social relations. For Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Rancière, social relations are both maintained and contested through the modifications of space and architecture. For them, space is not a neutral container or a mere

background for political activity. Instead, the configuration of space is simultaneously a configuration of politics – of which architecture provides a good example.

Following insights from these thinkers, this study asserts that architecture is not an outcome of external political ideology but more importantly a medium in which the scope and meaning of politics can be configured in the first place.

1.1.1 Research objectives

The research addresses the political dimension of architecture, its complex historiographies, and theoretical trajectories at a moment when there indisputably exists a strong presence of politics in contemporary architectural discourse. However, as it will be argued throughout this study, the problem is not limited only to contemporary politicized architectural discourse. Instead, we are returning to a broader problem of conceptualizing and theorizing politics and the political in relation to architecture (Lahiji, 2014a; Kaminer, 2017; Bell & Zacka, 2020).

By approaching these theoretical and historical entanglements and disputes from new angles, the research aims to move beyond the conceptualization of *political architecture*. In the study, political architecture refers to representations of external political ideologies and social relations that ultimately define the political conditions for architecture. Understood from this perspective, architecture is either inherently political and directly "in the service of politics" (see, for example, Nochlin, 1978) or due to the same reason hardly ever political, as there is no room for political autonomy (see, for example, Tafuri, 2000).

The research in general and research articles in particular claim that such an understanding of politics is too narrow, and it suggests an alternative conceptualization of architectural politics. Whereas political architecture assumes architecture to be *a representation* of political ideologies and values ultimately external to architecture, the approach elaborated in this study suggests that architecture can be understood as a *configuration of politics* as such. Understood in this way, architecture can be considered as a process in which political agencies, ideologies, and aspirations are not only materialized but also invented anew in new built forms. In this sense, architecture is itself a mode of politics. It is political, as it both mediates and contests the existing spatial divisions and prevailing social relations.

Architecture as a political discourse appears primarily in visuo-spatial form, in which politics is not limited only to "political buildings" or direct political uses of architecture. The research thus addresses not only questions about political architecture directly but politics as a spatial configuration and reconfiguration of what is considered common sense more broadly. In this regard, the aim of this study is twofold. The purpose is first to examine a conceptualization of politics understood as a struggle over the spatial configuration of society. Furthermore, as the study suggests, it is precisely architecture and the configuration of the built environment that provide a privileged medium for elaborating and analysing such politics.

The study suggests a renewed theoretical framework for such a spatial configuration of politics and its relevance for architecture, discussing this especially in relation to the political thought of Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre, and Jacques Rancière in particular. The point is not to claim that in their writings there exists a systematic connection between architecture and politics. To be clear, it is far from their primary concerns. However, as the research attempts to show, their conceptualization of politics implies a strong spatial framework that can be articulated through architecture and built frameworks. Moreover, the study does not aim to claim that there would be a profound connection between these thinkers or that they address the spatial dimension of politics and its relevance for architecture in identical ways. Nevertheless, even if there is no shared philosophical system or active dialogue between these thinkers, their conceptualization of politics, linked to an idea configuring new political space, is a theme that I consider relevant to discuss in a collected manner.

While such spatial emphasis is for these thinkers not solely limited to architecture as such, the elaboration of it precisely in the context of architecture can be taken to theorize how such political change as spatial change can be thought of in more concrete terms. Therefore, the use of architectural examples of such politics by Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Rancière should not be ignored or overlooked. Instead, it is precisely through such concrete examples embedded in the built environment and the material space between us that we can understand and better grasp the relatively abstract idea of the spatial configuration of politics.

To better understand and analyse such conceptualization of politics, the research is structured around the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between space, architecture, and politics in the political thought of Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Rancière?
2. How does architecture as an articulation and production of space shape the conceptualization of politics?
3. If space, the built environment, and architecture are saturated with dominant forms of power and existing social relations, can alternative political agencies and counter-hegemonic strategies still be found in the production of space and architecture?

1.1.2 Definitions of architecture and politics

While the use of both architecture and politics in this work is intentionally broad and eclectic, it is necessary to outline certain tentative and preliminary definitions for both.

The definition of architecture in this work is foregrounded in relation to its political dimension. In the study, architecture merges into a broader production and organization of space and the built environment. Here the study follows especially Lefebvre's definition in which "'architecture' is the production of space at a specific level, ranging from furniture to gardens and parks and extending even to landscapes" (Lefebvre, 2014b, p. 3). In short, the definition of architecture is linked to a broader notion of space and its societal production. Its

final aim is not only building but a new conceptualization of society, and hence it is definitively linked to politics.

Even if such a definition and the understanding of architecture in this work can be criticized for being too general and a catch-all phrase, as it covers not only professional architectural practice or even building, it is also necessary to maintain such a loose definition as it is only from this broad standpoint possible to acknowledge architecture's political use beyond the mere representational logic of political architecture.

Like the broad conceptualization of architecture, the understanding of politics in this work also defies any fixed and clear-cut definition. Politics in this work refers to both the maintenance and contestation of different social relations in a broad sense. Following especially Rancière, politics in this works refers to a distribution and redistribution of what is considered the common and shared interests in society. In short, politics is a process in which the existing social relations are produced, maintained, and contested.

Moreover, in this study it is asserted that such a conceptualization of politics is linked to a spatial configuration and reconfiguration of society and its power relations. In the context of this work, the spatial emphasis of politics incorporates the broad notion of architecture as production of space. Following these definitions, what is proposed is that there is no fixed political identity of architecture, as the relationship between architecture and politics is constantly constructed and reconstructed in relation to existing social relations, namely, their support on one hand and contestation on the other.

1.1.3 Research articles

This article-based dissertation consists of four research articles. While the articles have their own research contexts and questions, they can also be taken to examine the spatial configuration of politics and architectural design as its manifestation from complementary and supplementary perspectives. The articles include:

(A1) Marxist and Modernist: Walter Benjamin's Encounter with the Architectural Avant-Garde
(A2) Henri Lefebvre's Lessons from the Bauhaus
(A3) Architectural Utopias as Methods for Experimenting with the (Im)Possible
(A4) Designing Dissensual Commonsense: Critical Art, Architecture and Design in Jacques Rancière's Political Thought

The first article, "Marxist and Modernist: Walter Benjamin's Encounter with the Architectural Avant-Garde" (A1), examines the convolutions of the early 20th century modern architectural avant-garde and simultaneous Marxist discourses on arts and politics through Benjamin's writings. Benjamin's fascination with cities, architecture, and urban space, and the politics associated, for example, with 19th century Paris and seminal urban figures such as the Flâneur has been, of course, a subject of long-standing academic interest for decades.

In the article, I examine in particular the relationship between architecture and politics in Benjamin's thought by outlining his theoretical interest towards post-WWI modernism and the avant-garde. Benjamin's discussion of modernist architectural avant-garde is a part of his broader reworking of the relationship between arts and politics. Informed by the social context in the aftermath of WWI, including the emergence of such political movements as communism and fascism, Benjamin aims to find a new progressive and emancipatory conceptualization of politics embedded in emerging artistic technologies that would respond to the new experience of modernity. In this context for Benjamin, new architectural forms emerging after WWI responded to the crisis and destruction of traditional subjectivity and outlined fresh insights into the rapid change of the living environment and social relations beyond classical bourgeois conceptualizations of the world and perceptions of urban space mediated by the classical cultural canon.

However, for Benjamin new architectural forms are not only prosthetic extensions for political ideology but an active medium for reconfiguring the scope and meaning of social relations that transmit politics. As such, Benjamin outlines a more complex relationship between architecture and politics, which remains relevant from a contemporary perspective as well. Rather than thinking that artistic forms are political mainly because they represent external political ideologies and conjunctures, Benjamin is primarily interested in architectural forms aiming to create a new sensorial perception of the world. In the article, Benjamin's approach is contextualized in relation to broader cultural politics of post-WWI avant-garde and architecture, which provide an important historical example for theorizing the central thesis of this study: rather than looking at architectural politics solely on the basis of external political representations, it is crucial to acknowledge how "politics" is also produced through the configuration of new architectural forms and the positions they take in relation to the existing social relations.

The second article, "Henri Lefebvre's Lessons from the Bauhaus" (A2), examines how in a similar way for Lefebvre architecture is not limited to external political ideologies and political reforms through architecture. Instead, Lefebvre emphasizes the integral political dimension of architectural production that is partially isolated from the existing mode of production and social relations.

The article highlights these two different yet interlinked ways of understanding the political dimension of architecture implicit in Lefebvre's thought. In a very generalizing sense, the first is reformist in that architecture takes the task of planning and reorganizing society in accordance with political decisions from above. Historically, such politics is evident especially in the social mission of modernism linked to social democracy. The second understanding of politics is based on more revolutionary architectural subversion, in which architecture rejects the existing status quo and engagement with it. Historically this is evident especially in the experimental architectural movements in the 1960s and 1970s that aimed to challenge the reformist idea of changing society through design as a whole and instead proposed counter-design practices.

The article illustrates the complex coexistence between these two political strands in Lefebvre's thought by examining his critical reading of the Bauhaus, which is, of course, a pivotal historical point of reference for politically and socially engaged reformist architecture. More broadly, Lefebvre's reading of the Bauhaus can be read in light of his wider criticism of modernist architecture and its politics (CIAM, New Frankfurt, Le Corbusier, etc.). However, the article argues that by looking closer at Lefebvre's reading of the Bauhaus, it is possible to identify a more complex trajectory of modernist utopian impulses to change society through design.

While Lefebvre strongly rejects the reformist tendencies of the Bauhaus, he acknowledges that the school plays an important and historic role for advancing political change through architecture. As such, Lefebvre's criticism of the Bauhaus should be reconsidered in terms of offering a lesson in modernism. Its attempt to create a new space to configure new social relations becomes an unfinished project. Expanding from the historical discussion of the Bauhaus to questions regarding different conceptualizations between political architecture and architecture as a spatial configuration of politics, Lefebvre's conceptualization of architectural politics, similarly to Benjamin's, can be taken to further argue how the reconfiguration of space itself through architecture (revolution in architectural forms, etc.) is inseparable from the external political function of architecture.

The third article, "Architectural Utopias as Methods for Experimenting with the (Im)Possible" (A3), continues by examining the different efficacies of architectural politics in Lefebvre's thought and discussing his understanding of different architectural utopias and their political functions. Furthermore, the article revisits the polemics between Lefebvre and Manfredo Tafuri regarding the differences between utopian and ideological approaches to architecture. Whereas the second article is based on the distinction between reformist architectural strategies and more revolutionary subversive architectural approaches while also defending their complex intertwinement, the third article is based on a similar distinction between the two conceptualizations of utopia inherent in Lefebvre's thought, which also tangles with the famous connection between utopia and ideology present in Tafuri's work.

Lefebvre, like Tafuri, rejects a trajectory in which architecture is subordinated to an abstract utopian plan in which political agency is highly static and merely a way for implementing external reformist policies. Such a definition has a long history in utopian thought. Throughout history, political utopias have taken an architectural shape and static blueprint for the future in which architecture is mobilized directly for external political and philosophical ideas and ideals (Morrison, 2015). However, even if such a static conceptualization of utopia is rejected, Lefebvre, contrary to Tafuri, nevertheless defends the "dialectical use of utopianism as a method", in which architectural utopias are understood as a mediation between what is considered possible (Lefebvre, 1995, p. 357; see also Coleman, 2013; Coleman, 2014). For Lefebvre, architectural utopias not only promote a vague vision for the ideal society but first and

foremost have attempted to articulate something that cannot be clearly stated in the existing political discourse.

Whereas according to Lefebvre the conceptualization of abstract utopianism aimed to provides a certain blueprint for an ideal society beyond conflicts and maintaining the status quo, the political logic of such dialectical utopias as methods is the opposite: architectural utopian thinking is not only about order, harmony, and ideal spaces. It is also about disharmony and disintegration in the current state of things. Compared to abstract utopianism, Lefebvre's understanding of architectural utopias is hence not only a reflection of modes of production but also of political struggle and contestation, an active ground for reclaiming different meanings, discourses, and interpretations. It examines the contours of society and the ways in which the world is perceived and how it is possible to change it by examining mental and lived conceptualizations of space, its inherent imaginaries, and how they relate to existing socio-political conjunctures.

The fourth article, "Designing Dissensual Commonsense: Critical Art, Architecture and Design in Jacques Rancière's Political Thought" (A4), examines the aesthetico-political genealogies of contemporary critical artistic, design, and architectural practices throughout the work of Jacques Rancière. Compared to the other articles, this article is not solely focused on architecture but on the broader political nature of design, from typography and industrial design to architecture and urban planning. In this regard, the article reflects especially the field of political design, in which it is suggested that design practice itself should be considered a pivotal mode of politics.

What is examined further in the article is that such politics is by its nature integrally aesthetic and conceptually traceable to what Rancière calls *the aesthetic regime of art* involving both complex historiographies of the avant-garde and modernism; according to Rancière, even today it affects contemporary aesthetic and artistic thought. For Rancière, the genealogy of the aesthetic regime helps comprehend how any political change necessarily implies a novel aesthetic conceptualization of space and novel forms of considering the world and new experiential and experimental ways of responding to it. By focusing especially on the status and history of design and architecture in the aesthetic regime of art, the article aims to understand such connections of aesthetics and politics in the context of this study.

1.1.4 Structure of the study

Alongside the research articles, the introductory part of the dissertation contextualizes the broader scope of this study by examining previous scholarship and theoretical and methodological questions concerning approaches studying architecture from the point of view of political theory. In Chapter 2 of the introductory part, I discuss the research context, settings, and previous scholarship. The chapter begins with a problematization of political architecture and its representational framework of external politics, and it departs from political architecture to what is called the spatial configuration of politics. The

chapter further discusses the conceptualization of politics and illustrates why it is precisely architecture that can be taken to analyse this.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological and theoretical choices of this study by staging the connection between architecture and political theory. The chapter highlights in particular the problem of representation in the study of visual data such as art, architecture, and other cultural artefacts in visual politics. If the representation embedded in visual culture "data", such as architecture, is understood only as mimetic representation, the task of political science is mainly to explain its external political dimension. However, methodologically the study is closer to approaches that hold the production of political representations and visual meanings to be an integral part of the production of politics. As such, the study rejects simplistic idea that visual data needs to be "read politically". Instead, our encounter with visual articulations of the world is always a construction of political meanings and significances in a broader sense as well.

Chapter 4 provides a general introduction for the theoretical framework of the study by discussing the political thought of Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre, and Jacques Rancière. I introduce their key concepts, historical context, and theoretical influences. In the final part of the chapter, a brief comparison is included to discuss the similarities but importantly also the differences of these readings.

Chapter 5 outlines the concluding remarks and key findings of the study, discusses the relationship between the introductory part and the articles, and points out the actuality of the arguments made throughout the articles and the study as a whole.

2 RESEARCH CONTEXT AND PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

> Linking architecture and politics presents certain difficulties. Neither field can be reduced to the other: nor is it self-evident that architecture's relation to politics has any major impact on power relations. It might appear that architecture is always political in the sense that anything is political, the meaning of politics being diluted to some generalized cultural association; or else that architecture is rarely political, in which case the definition is narrowly confined to those activities directly influencing power relations. Notwithstanding these qualifications, it would be impossible to deny that some real, if ambiguous connection exists between the two realms. (McLeod, 2000 [1989], pp. 681–682)

2.1 Rejecting the representational framework of "political architecture"

Before going into a more detailed analysis of the theoretical framework of this study, I will elaborate and clarify the conceptualization of politics and its relation to architecture in this study by identifying the problem of "political architecture" in previous scholarship and how the spatial configuration of politics is understood in this work. "Political architecture" is here understood from the point of view of a representational framework in which architecture becomes political mainly through external political interventions. The representational framework refers here to architectural forms and images that organize the world and social relations in accordance with external political ideologies (Frampton, 1985, p. 240).

In this study it is asserted that such a narrow approach leads to thinking of politics as something that is ultimately outside of architecture. As already shown, such an assumption includes lot of critical political thought from Adorno and Tafuri onwards. However, also in political and social sciences more broadly there is a commonplace assumption that architecture functions as a symbolical representation of external political forces, such as the nation-state or sovereign

power, embedded in the physical space (Lasswell, 1979; Goodsell, 1988; Jones, 2009). Such an understanding of architectural politics merges with the political uses of architecture, for example, in nation-building and its representative monuments.[5]

In particular, the representational dimension of political architecture is often related to the appearance of the dominant forms of power. In *The Edifice Complex: The Architecture of Power*, Deyan Sudjic takes the fascination of architecture among dictators as revealing something essential about how "architecture is used by political leaders to seduce, to impress, and to intimidate" (2005, p. 1). Sudjic's understanding of architecture's political function is extremely limited, however, as it understands political power only from the point of (largely outdated) personal sovereign power, which results also in an outdated conceptualization of the symbolic dimension of politics.[6]

A slightly more nuanced articulation of power and understanding of political architecture can be found for example in Pierre Bourdieu's thought, even though it also illustrates the broader tendency to reduce architecture's politics to mere symbolism of power. According to Bourdieu:

> Appropriated space is one of the sites where power is consolidated and realized, and indeed in its surely most subtle form: the unperceived force of symbolic power. Architectonic spaces whose silent dictates are directly addressed to the body are undoubtedly among the most important components of the symbolism of power, precisely because of their invisibility. (Bourdieu 1991, p. 113)

Following Nietzsche, architecture might be considered the *language of the men of power*; from Albert Speer to the contemporary skyscrapers of Abu Dhabi (to name just the most widely circulated examples), dominant forms of power are manifested and implemented through architecture and built forms (Scott, 1998; Dovey, 1999; Hirst, 2005; Kaika & Thielen, 2006).

From this perspective, the political dimension of architecture might become even trivial: if all architecture is necessarily political, then ultimately no architecture is. If architecture directly signifies external political goals, ideology, or dominant forms of power, there cannot exist the critical agency inherent in the architectural practices itself. Due to their close relationship, the architect is a mere servant of power, unable to escape the external financial and power realizations that define the way in which architectural proposals are realized and materialized. In this regard, one may remember statements by such famous architects as Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, or Philip Johnson that the political

[5] Architecture's capability of reinforcing different political ideologies through history is emphasized in the works such as Adrian Tinniswood's *Visions of Power: Ambition and Architecture from Ancient Rome to Modern Paris (*1998), Penelope J. E. Davies' *Architecture and Politics in Republican Rome* (2017), Lawrence Vale's *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (1992), Lisa Findley's *Building Change: Architecture, Politics and Cultural Agency* (2005), and Emily Pugh's *Architecture, Politics, and Identity in Divided Berlin* (2014) to name just a few.

[6] Of course the architectural symbolism that is associated, for example, to Donald Trump (e.g., Trump Tower) or Vladimir Putin (e.g., Putin's palace in Gelendžik) illustrates that such edifice complex is still present in contemporary politics as well.

dimension of architecture is not even worth discussing because at the end of the day the political restriction of architecture from above cannot be avoided.[7]

In these examples, the political logic of architecture is clear and largely causal: form follows power (Kaika & Thielen, 2006). Understood in this way, the relationship between architecture and politics is solely an articulation and negotiation of *who gets what, when, and how* in built forms, to follow Harold D. Lasswell's classical definition of politics (for his understanding of political architecture in particular, see Lasswell, 1979).

The purpose of this study is not to deny the direct function of political architecture. However, such approaches rarely address the configuration and reconfiguration of politics through architectural space even when acknowledging the crucial political role of architecture and built environment in the constitution of public life.[8] Instead, such understanding ultimately implies a fixed relationship between architecture and politics as ultimately two separate spheres. Architecture may or may not promote politics, but it is not politics itself. What this study proposes is that limiting architecture to such a representational connection to politics implies that politics already exists and the relationship between architecture and politics is simply a matter of making this connection.

The study maintains that it is important to acknowledge a more complex notion of politics integrally embedded in architecture, which remains conceptually more ambiguous in relation to political symbolism and political representations. In this regard, the study is influenced especially by Albena Yaneva, who suggests that "existing attempts to connect architecture and politics typically strive to reveal the politics behind the design or the design techniques disguised as politics" (2017, p. 15). Yaneva associates this with the foundational theories of politics, in which politics (and its relation to architecture) is analysed from the point of view of classical, well-established political concepts such as ideologies, nation-states, anarchism, activism, and so forth ultimately separate from architecture. In such tropes, architecture is "politicized" and read with political attributes: architecture becomes Nazi architecture, fascist architecture, Stalinist architecture, DDR architecture, neoliberal architecture, ecological architecture, humanitarian architecture, and activist architecture. In its essence, architecture is neutral but there may exist architecture for refugees, architecture for the 99%, architecture for the 1%, the architecture of degrowth, and the architecture of terror, to name just a few key contemporary modifiers.

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[7] The work does not primarily address the political role of architects as professions. For such reading see especially Peggy Deamer's important *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class, and the Politics of Design* (2015).

[8] A good example here is *Democracy and Public Space: The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance* by John Parkinson (2012). Parkinson claims that political science, blinded by the emergence of digital spaces, has failed to understand the historically seminal role of concrete public space and the built environment for politics. Yet, while proposing that democratic action and the existence of politics require physical space and political architecture, the study says almost nothing about the configuration of this space as an integral part of politics as such. Instead, the space and built environment, even if defined as inherently political, primarily become an extension of politics, leading to an assumption that space and politics are ultimately separate spheres.

For Yaneva, however, architecture is political primarily when it does not take a political signifier but instead "reimagines the forms of political representation and reinvents the sites of political action" (Yaneva, 2017, p. 5). To use a classic and widely cited case, the underpass bridge to Jones Beach in New York designed by Robert Moses (who later became the "master builder" of New York City) in 1920 provides a good example of two plausible articulations of politics related to architecture. The underpass was designed so low that only private cars could enter it, hence excluding entrance to the beach by public transportation. It has been suggested that this was not a mistake by design but instead a deliberate attempt to limit access to the beach to only that socio-demographic population which could afford a private car – and hence were largely white (for a seminal article on the politics of the bridge, see Winner, 1980).

While the bridge is, as Yaneva critically notes, a prime example of political architecture in the very "classic" sense, meaning that the design decision was generated by an external political decision (in this case, segregation policy), it is also important to acknowledge more profound politics associated with the bridge. It was not only the policies of segregation but the bridge itself that prevented a particular group of people from going to the beach; hence, the segregation did not appear from above but, the other way round, was produced through the bridge, among other things. The bridge thus comprises a more profound element, being not only a material and physical representation or extension of politics but also related to the social and imaginary constitution of society and its proper and dominant space. In short, the politics of the bridge is not reducible only to the representational framework of external segregation politics. Instead, the bridge also produces such politics of segregation.

But what is this form of politics? Tahl Kaminer suggests in his important study *The Efficacy of Architecture: Political Contestation and Agency* that it is obvious that architecture is constantly utilized for various political purposes, but whether it can be politics itself is a far more complex question:

> That architecture represents society in diverse manners; that architecture is created, to a certain degree, by forces external to it such as technology, economics, or politics, is rarely questioned. Yet the extent to which these external forces leave their mark on the completed building has often been debated, and the idea that architecture, architectural design, or the building are not merely passive, formed by society, but rather a participatory force in creating or shaping society has been fiercely contested, and, more often than not, rejected. (Kaminer, 2017, p. 1)

Kaminer rejects an instrumental conceptualization of political architecture (vulgar architecture, vulgar politics), meaning that there would be clear-cut relationships between architecture and different political ideologies. Instead, for Kaminer "architecture, architectural designs and buildings are not only expressions of society, politics, technology or economics, outcomes molded by external forces. They necessarily partake in shaping society as well, even if in a limited sense" (Kaminer, 2017, p. 10).

Graham Cairns (2019) has maintained in a similar way that the political dimension of architecture is not limited to uses of architecture as a semiotically codable political object. Rather, a visual mediated imagery for politics is produced through architecture as a medium:

> Under a visual cultural studies rubric the role of architecture in the political domain is more readily analysed as a phenomenon usurped by the images which carry its likeness. In this context it is not the substantive bearer of an ideologically laden semiotic formula in and of itself, but rather as a component referent of a larger visual construct that the 'social reader' deciphers using codes imbibed via other fields of ideological training filtered through non-architectural modes of engagement. Experienced predominantly through images, or embedded in a world read as a sequence of images, architecture not only becomes a semiotically decodable object, it becomes an object deciphered in the diluted immaterial format of the image. (Cairns, 2019, p. 6)

The approaches mentioned here move from external architectural politics towards a broader framework of linking architecture and politics together in a manner in which architectural design "can have political effects but must not be reduced to a given politics" (Barry, 2001, cited in Yaneva, 2017, p. 4). This provides a point of departure for a more substantial understanding of the relationship between architecture and politics in this work. As the research maintains, architecture is not only a reflection but also a production of power and ideologies. The "politics" in "political architecture" is thus not limited solely to mere manifestation and representation of political sovereignty, ideologies, and power.

2.2 From political architecture to architecture as spatial configuration of politics

> It is a truism that political tendencies are implicit in every work of art, every artistic epoch since, after all, they are historical configurations of consciousness. But just as deeper rock strata emerge only where the rock is fissured, the deep formation of a 'political tendency' likewise reveals itself only in the fissures of art history (and works of art). The technical revolutions are the fracture points of artistic development; it is there that the different political tendencies may be said to come to the surface. In every new technical revolution, the political tendency is transformed, as if by its own volition, from a concealed element of art into a manifest one. (Benjamin, 1999 [1927], pp. 61–62)

> Social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space. Their underpinning is spatial. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 404)

> Politics is about the very existence of a common sphere, the rules of functioning of that sphere, the count of the objects that belong to it and of the subjects who are able to deal with it. Politics is about the configuration of the space of politics, the redistribution of matters into private or public matters, the redistribution of places between private and public spaces. (Rancière, 2009a, p. 284)

What is proposed in this study is that the political dimension of architecture is not limited to what could be called representational or external frameworks of politics. Architecture not only represents power or political undercurrents but more actively constructs and configures them. Moreover, the political dimension of architecture is situated not only in the political intentions located in specific architecture and buildings but in broader political conflicts, struggles, and battles that are mediated – and to some extent also produced – through architecture and the spatial configuration of the built environment and political space itself.

2.2.1 Architecture, autonomy and politics

Before going into a further analysis of this, I wish to avoid a certain conceptual confusion: the study does not suggest that architecture is political because of its own autonomous form. Such an argument has been central especially in so-called autonomous architecture from the 1970s onwards, which was primarily a response to the failure of modernism and its social engagement in architecture (Martin, 2010; Kaminer, 2017, 6–8). Here, political engagement becomes replaced by a broader notion of criticality (Hays, 1984). Architects such as Charles Jencks, Colin Rowe, and Peter Eisenmann emphasized that if one wants to identify the critical (contesting the existing status quo) dimension of architecture, it is to be found from architecture itself (Andreotti, 2016).

While rejecting the social mission and utopian dimension of modern architecture (that one can change society through design), architectural discourse discovered this criticality, for example, in phenomenological themes such as "dwelling", "sense of place", and "ethics" (Lohtaja, 2020). Another important influence was deconstructivism; compared to the constructive attitude of modernism, the autonomous architect sought to understand the political dimension of architecture from the point of view of de-construction (see, for example, Eisenman, 1971; Wigley, 1993).[9]

Even if the emphasis on architecture's autonomy in architectural discourse in the 1970s granted more complex agency to architectural practice and architectural form by turning to architecture itself rather than its external representation, it also necessarily reinforced the distinction between architecture and politics (or economy and society) as two clearly separate fields. While the study shares similar concerns, especially when it comes to the direct political mobilization of architecture, the architectural politics discussed in this work nevertheless refers to a different theorization of politics. If the autonomous turn in architecture leads to the hypothesis that architecture is politically meaningful, itself leading to abstract categories such as ethics, dwelling on earth, and sense of place, the purpose of this work is to defend the integral political dimension from different points of view.

[9] For example, Eisenman's Derridean deconstruction of architecture emphasizes how the political dimension of architecture is not to be found in the representation of external political ideologies but rather in the impossibility to represent politics directly in the first place (Eisenman & Derrida, 1997). A seminal example of this is *Das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, the memorial for the Holocaust in Berlin designed by Eisenman.

In this study, the point is therefore not to say that architecture should not collide with external political ideologies at all. Instead, the study claims that architecture necessarily constantly collides with external ideologies, but the relationship is more complex.

2.2.2 Imaginary, spatial and aesthetic articulations of politics

As already preliminarily outlined in Section 1.1.2, politics in this work refers to both the maintenance and contestation of different social relations in a broad sense. The use of social relations in this work is not only limited to a strict Marxist use of the term to define the relations of production and the class positions inherent in them. Instead, it involves everything that constitutes common sense: what is sayable, visible, and imaginable. In this regard, the study is informed especially by Rancière, who suggests:

> Even in Marxism, it is clear that social relations of production are not simply economic relations. If ancient political philosophy has taught us anything, it is that politics *is* class struggle, and that means, precisely, that the class struggle cannot be defined exclusively in economic terms. The class struggle is what interrupts simple economic law, by which I mean the simple management of wealth. The 'poor' and the 'rich' of politics in the ancient world, or the 'proletarian' and the 'bourgeois of the modern era, cannot be defined simply as groups with conflicting economic interests. There is class struggle insofar as classes are not classes – in the sense of parts of a society that group all those with the same interests – but operators of disidentification, that is, of intervals between identities and qualities. (Rancière 2017, pp. 143–144)

Politics – as a struggle over social relations – outlines and expands what is considered possible and common sense in given societal conjuncture. Such conceptualization of politics is often elaborated in political theories that highlight the contested and emancipatory nature of politics, meaning that politics is not limited to organizational matter but instead inherently a field of various convergent conflicts that constitute the core of political life (Rancière, 1999; Mouffe, 2005; Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014; Jakonen, 2020).

I will examine this from three interlinked perspectives that are relevant for the study. First, politics in this work is not limited only to direct constitutions, laws, election results and implemented policies. Instead, the constitution of politics is always about the politics itself: assumptions, values, arguments, and contestation of common sense. In this sense, politics is first and foremost about the struggle over what is considered common, something that everyone shares that incorporates both the material and imaginary dimensions of society (Levitas, 2013; Browne & Diehl, 2019).

Here the study follows thinkers such as Rancière and Gabriel Rockhill, who have emphasized that politics is the struggle over common sense broadly: what can be thought and what seems to be viable and legitimate. Rockhill explains:

> Politics, in the strict sense of the term, is not reducible to the various battles over governmental power, the multifarious plots of manipulation and control, or the motley

> attempts to defend the interests of groups or individuals. It is a collective activity whose object is the institutions of society as such. It, therefore, belongs to the human domain of creative production. There is no final form of politics or ultimate structure that can be determined once and for all, meaning that there is no end to the activity of politics itself. (Rockhill, 2014a, p. 145)

Cornelius Castoriadis has provided a concept of imaginary institutions of society to emphasize the imaginary struggle of different meanings of what is common and shared as the core of politics (Castoriadis, 1997). For Castoriadis, social being is based primarily on the imagination that produces a particular community: a new imaginary always produces a particular way of living and seeing the society that reveals conflict between multiple coexisting ideologies. In the way it is understood here following Castoriadis, the imaginary is not a direct alternative to material realities. Instead, the question of how one situates oneself concerning the world, others, collectives, and institutions is never based on direct representation but instead constantly imagined from the point of view of different social and political imaginaries.[10]

Second, in this study it is asserted that such contestation over shared community and common sense is spatial: the production of space itself is linked to the production of politics. Here, space appears as an intersecting set of relations between different social, cultural, economic, and political forces (Rawes, 2008; Smith & Ballantyne, 2012; Frichot & Loo, 2013; Massey, 2005; Sassen, 2011).

Mustafa Dikeç suggests that "politics inaugurates space, and spatialization is central to politics as constitutive part of it" (Dikeç, 2015, p. 1). Understood from this perspective, politics is about the constant reconfiguration of the shared common space itself. Following the political thought of Jean-Luc Nancy, for example, politics is about the establishment of the shared space of the common (Nancy, 2000). It the constitution of this space as being-together itself that makes politics possible, not only its implications for politics (public space as precondition for free speech, etc.). Agreeing with Nancy, space is political, beyond the external and "artificial space of mimetic representations" (Nancy, 2000, p. 66; see also Dikeç, 2015, p. 75).

Space is not only an outcome of politics but also a medium in which various political modalities and possibilities can unfold. As Kimmo Lapintie suggests, "If space is conceptually related to social relations, that is, if a spatial configuration already has a social interpretation, then we should not try to relate society and space, but rather to define space in a way that makes this conceptual entailment possible" (2007, p. 40). Various spatial political conflicts are thus not only about direct and concrete use of city space (zoning, regulations, rules) and its contestation (urban protests and demonstrations). Instead, they are

[10] Here the linguistic politics of street naming and the politics of commemoration embedded in architecture and other "city texts" provide an interesting example (see Vuolteenaho & Berg, 2009; Palonen, 2013). The nationalistic street naming and other linguistic coding of urban space not only represents the nationalistic idea of the state but is also a way to imagine that community in the first place (Anderson, 2006).

simultaneously about the configuration of politics embedded in space more broadly. [11]

Furthermore, such conceptualization of politics is inherently aesthetic. The aesthetic dimension of politics does not refer here, for example, to direct development in which political "substance" would have become somewhat less important, the typical trope in the history of Western political thought, in which it is often assumed that aesthetics constitutes a threat to politics in its irrational form by blurring the capability for political judgment (Rebentisch, 2011).

To counter such an understanding of aesthetics in the context of politics, I situate my reading especially in the tradition of aesthetic politics, suggesting that aesthetics does not replace or disguise politics but is an inherent aspect of political activity (see, for example, Lindroos, 2003; Plot, 2014; Panagia, 2018; Feola, 2018). Here the concept of aesthetics is not limited to artistic activities but instead used in a broad sense as the delimitation of various sensorial, social, and political registers that shape the political experience (Gage, 2019, p. 5).

Furthermore, this aesthetic dimension cannot be detached from the spatial dimension of politics. According to Sanna Lehtinen, one needs to think of spatial and aesthetic experience in terms of unity. For Lehtinen, the experiential and aesthetic notion of space (beyond geometrical space) allows us to consider "space as a field between many, often conflicting political and social forces that affect spatial practices and perceptions" (Lehtinen, 2015, p. 17). Dikeç suggests in a similar way that "space performs this aesthetic function by giving form and order to objects of perception; it is a capacity for things to appear and exhibit relations of simultaneity and order" (Dikeç, 2015, p. 5).

2.2.3 Architecture as a spatial configuration of politics

In this work, such an understanding of politics – imaginary, spatial, and aesthetic – is approached from the point of view of architecture. Here architecture is not only a reflection of politics but in the centre of politics. Considered as a "basic social institution" (Bell & Zacka, 2020, p. 2), in the study it is suggested that architecture shapes the forms of political communities, ways of living together, and what is considered common.

What is proposed in this study is that architecture is socially produced in accordance with existing power relations but also shaped and reconceptualized by their constant contestation and counter-imaginaries. [12] As Gabriel Rockhill

[11] Theories, such as actor-network theory (ANT) and object-oriented ontologies (OOO), and their applications in architectural theories, have also shown, how non-human artefacts participate in the construction of politics as well (see Yaneva, 2017).

[12] The discussion of the border wall between Mexico and the US can be taken as an example in which, in addition to actual physical buildings and barriers, it is also an imaginary and aesthetic dimension of politics that matters. Ronald Rael suggests in his *Borderwall as Architecture* (2017) that the notion of the wall is not just a material or structural but also conceptual question regarding how architecture can visualize the notion of border as something that simultaneously connects and separates. Whereas the political constitution throughout the politics of a wall appears in the forms of xenophobia, racism, and assumed difference between the Mexican and US conceptualization of laws, morals, and culture, the experimental discussion of the wall and its architectural renderings can be also, according to Rael, be taken

proposes, "the history of the modern world could, in fact, be written in terms of the battle of buildings, and the urban landscape is one of the privileged sites of ideological and social struggle" (Rockhill, 2014b, p. 20). Following Rockhill, "architectural forms tend to both manifest and accentuate socio-political structures and norms, while at the same time being the site of ongoing struggles over the collective formation – and potential reconfiguration – of the social order" (Rockhill, 2014b, p. 23).

Rather than reducing political architecture to clear-cut political or ideological motives behind design decisions and commissions, the work traces the political dimension of architecture to the production of shared political space. Following the political thought of Hannah Arendt, architecture can be seen as an attempt to build "the space of public appearance" as a necessary precondition for political life (Baird, 1995; Teerds, 2014). In this sense "what's at stake is not architecture as a substitute for politics but rather, architecture as a mode of politics" (Beiner, 2020, p. 104).

Different political ideologies are produced through architecture (Molnar, 2103; Wetherell, 2020). The architectural style of a certain era (e.g. art nouveau, functionalism, post-modernism) helps us to understand the particularity of given political fabric (Tafuri, 1976; Jameson, 1989; Kaminer, 2011; Spencer, 2016; Soules, 2021).

However, as always when dealing with politics, there is no causal and deterministic relationship to be found. Instead, such "relations have a contingent character, and are malleable and prone to reconfiguration" (Kaminer, 2017, p. 148). It would be naive to think that there is a direct formal architectural counterpart for political regime and ideology.[13] As Kaminer maintains, "the relation of a specific form of architecture to a specific political movement and ideology is loose and associative at best" (Kaminer, 2017, p. 180). From this theoretical standpoint, various political ideologies and architectural forms seem to have certain contingent and complex connections (Markus, 1993; Kunze, 2014, p. 125). Here the study is informed by the examinations on the relationship between ideology and form from the point of view of cultural materialism, attempting to reject the straightforward dichotomy between the economic base and cultural superstructure of society (Williams, 1977; Jameson, 1981; Bennett, 1981; Ockman, 1985; Eagleton, 1990; Lahiji, 2012).[14]

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to speculate on imaginary sites of resistance that counter the current state of things. With architectural counterproposals such as a cross-border, open-air yoga studio that creates a shared social space regardless of the actual material obstacle in between, or the design of a children's seesaw that crosses the actual border, architectural rethinking of border space is used as a site of political speculations to rethink the notions of borders and citizenship and how they have never been static entities.

[13] Here it is also worth recalling Bernard Huet's famous statement in 1977 concerning the debates over formalism and realism: "Formalism, too, is not a matter of form. It is time to finish off the gross simplifications of a certain kind of 'formalist' criticism. Architecture is not fascist or Stalinist in its 'form'. There is only architecture of the fascist or Stalinist periods" (Huet, 2000, p. 259).

[14] One elaboration of this is given by Slavoj Žižek. For Žižek buildings reveal something profound about society but only indirect way: "When a building embodies democratic openness, this appearance is never a mere appearance – it has a reality of its own, it structures the way

The transformation of urban space, built environment, and architecture shapes the political imaginary and the conceptualization of society. Jan-Werner Müller (2020) addresses such questions through the long-standing debate over the possibility for democratic architectural form for a democratic regime.[15] Müller follows the political thought of Claude Lefort by suggesting that democracy is not just a political regime implemented from above. Instead, it entails a broader experience of "institutionalized uncertainty" and a process in which different political forces, opinions, and values generate open and undetermined outcomes that cannot be fully defined. As Müller suggests, from this perspective architects cannot build democratic buildings but instead participate in the configuration of democracy itself (see also Lefort, 1989).

The history of welfare state architecture (Nordic modernism, brutalism, etc.), for example, is suffused with the idea that certain architectural forms may be inherently more democratic than others. For instance, it is often suggested that brutalist council housing is linked to democratic politics (Boughton, 2018). The ideologies of the welfare state, such as free health care, public housing, and a democratic educational system results in a certain modest, modernist, and utilitarian architectural style primarily because it needs to be cost-efficient and because there is a political decision to produce architecture that serves many instead of a few.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the idea of democracy can be directly translated into brutalist architectural form. Instead, architectural form may help to constitute the meaning and experience of democracy better than some other system (Fallan, 2012). The design of a public swimming hall, elementary school, or library, for instance, is a far more important performative and imaginary political act to envision what a democratic welfare state is about than any sociological ideal types of it (Swenarton, Avermaete, & van den Heuvel, 2014).

Alongside democracy is the notion of class, another key feature when evaluating brutalism and welfare state architecture. In a similar way, there is a connection between architectural form and the working class, which is, however, not only based on direct representation.

Regarding the connection between working class and brutalist housing estates such as the famous Robin Hood Gardens by Alison and Peter Smithson, Nicholas Thoburn proposes that "it is not a question of the representation of class, the architectural modelling of superficial or cliched impressions" (Thoburn, 2018, p. 613). Instead, the focus is on "how architecture handles specific social and material features of working-class experience" (Thoburn, 2018, p. 613). Understood in this way, architecture is a way to visualize abstract political

individuals interact in their real lives. (…) There is a coded message in an architectural formal play, and the message delivered by a building often functions as the 'return of the repressed' of the official ideology. Recall Wittgenstein's motto: what we cannot directly talk about can be shown by the form of our activity. What the official ideology cannot openly talk about can be shown by the mute signs of a building." (Žižek, 2016, p. 263.)

[15] Regarding this, see also Joan Ockman's "What Is Democratic Architecture? The Public Life of Buildings" (2011).

ideologies, conflicts, forms of power, and resistance but only in indirect ways without causal relationship.

In accord with Thoburn, I strongly reject the idea that architecture can directly represent the working class or even the ruling class as the trope of "political architecture" often assume. However, what I do believe is that architecture can contribute to a political, aesthetic, and spatial configuration and reconfiguration of various experiences and subjectivities that construct the composition of class.

While the purpose of this study is not to analyse the relationship between a particular architectural form and particular ideology or social class empirically, the work does engage the theoretical debates behind such assumptions concerning what it means to think of architecture's role in the construction of politics. As proposed in the recent *Architecture and Collective* life by Penny Lewis, Lorens Holm, and Sandra Costa Santos, architecture is a social practice that shapes the understanding of social relations and the various public political institutions that maintain them (Lewis, Holm, & Costa Santos, 2021). Architecture is an expression of public values but also way to formulate them. From the latter perspective, architecture can be seen as an active modification of "common" political space that directly affects the framework of increased or decreased political agency.

In the following section, I outline mediations between architecture and political theory in previous scholarship, in relation to which I also wish to frame this contribution. Naturally, this does not cover everything that has been written about the relationship between architecture and politics. Instead, the readings discussed here are relevant in a more particular sense, mainly because they challenge the notion of politics as something ultimately external to architecture and instead consider that the production of architecture is itself an activity for staging and producing political relations. The approaches discussed in the following section include:

1. approaches that emphasize the production of power relations, biopolitical governing techniques, and political subjectivities through architecture;
2. approaches discussing architecture as a tool to expand politics to areas that are not considered political in their essence and hence politicize, for example, domestic work, social care, and the social reproduction of space;
3. approaches considering architectural forms as agonistic (political) positions towards a broader project of (economical) urbanization; and
4. approaches in which architecture is understood as a politically transformative project and struggle over social, cultural, and political hegemony.

2.2.3.1 Architecture as Biopolitics

As mentioned in the previous section, one should not limit the political dimension of architecture to an analysis of ideologies, forms of power, and the

idea that "form follows power". Such an approach often implies that politics is a traceable and clearly articulated external sovereign power. However, a more nuanced articulation of such an idea in which architectural form follows power can also be found in approaches that consider the power relations of architecture not from the foundational perspective of politics (architecture reduced to the power of a sovereign or nation-state) but from the point of view of biopolitical governmentality (Wallenstein, 2009) Here, architecture moves from representing external politics to the production of politics through architecture (Aggregate, 2012) by becoming a form of modern governance beyond a clear articulation of sovereign power (Aslam, 2020).

Governing by architecture and design is not limited to political monuments or other direct manifestations of power embedded in urban space. Instead, it also operates by generating a broader spatial framework and infrastructure that produces the ideas of normal and abnormal ways of life. In Grant Vetter's *The Architecture of Control: A Contribution to the Critique of the Science of Apparatuses* (2012), such an approach is identified as "neo-panopticism". The concept is, of course, a reference to Michel Foucault's analysis of architecture as a dispositive of power in Jeremy Bentham's famous prison complex.[16] According to Foucault, the panopticon "gives power over people's minds through architecture" (Foucault, 1977, p. 205).

Similarly to the underpass bridge to Jones Beach mentioned earlier, the panopticon provides a good example of a very "classical" example of political architecture in social and political science. However, it also has a political force of its own that goes beyond "political architecture", at least in Foucault's thought. Indeed, Foucault is often credited as one of the few political theorists to take seriously the political dimension of architecture and modifications of space as a governing technique (Crampton & Elden, 2007; Harni & Lohtaja, 2016). For Foucault, the history of architecture is simultaneously a history of power becoming a more complex phenomenon than one associated directly with sovereignty. It ranges from "great strategies of geo-politics to the little tactics of the habitat, institutional architectures from the classroom to the design of hospitals" (Foucault, 1980, p. 149).

According to Foucault, architecture becomes political precisely in a way that it is no longer external to forms of power but is a way to produce forms of power itself. Such an understanding of architecture's integral politics emerges in tandem with Foucault's broader investigation of the genealogy of biopower and biopolitics from the 19th century onwards, which challenges a clear and direct articulation of political power and sovereignty:

> In the eighteenth century, one sees the development of reflection upon architecture as a function of the aims and techniques of the government of societies. One begins to see a form of political literature that addresses what the order of a society should be, what a city should be, given the requirements of the maintenance of order; given that one should avoid epidemics, avoid revolts, permit a decent and moral family life, and so

[16] To be specific, the panopticon was originally invented by Jeremy Bentham's brother, mechanical engineer Samuel Bentham.

> on. In terms of these objectives, how is one to conceive of both the organization of a city and the construction of a collective infrastructure? And how should houses be built? I am not saying that this sort of reflection appears only in the eighteenth century, but only that in the eighteenth century a very broad and general reflection on these questions takes place. If one opens a police report of the times—the treatises that are devoted to the techniques of government—one finds that architecture and urbanism occupy a place of considerable importance. (Foucault, 2000, p. 430)

Moving from political symbolism of sovereign spaces towards *avoiding epidemics and revolts*, architecture becomes a way to govern through normalization, steering people in the right direction and, on the other hand, making infrastructural boundaries and divisions between people.[17] From modern biopolitical governmentality onwards, architecture provides a framework that is not only a static container for politics but also an active political force of its own.

Alongside Foucault, a seminal elaboration of biopolitical governing techniques embedded in architecture is to be found in Gilles Deleuze's analysis of the "Society of Control" (1992), which addresses Foucault's insights from a renewed contemporaneous perspective. For Deleuze especially, the disciplinary and surveillance aspects of punitive society, culminating in the architectural model of the panopticon, have been replaced by more open and smooth spaces of control that do not directly prevent but rather modify the framework for different political potentialities and virtualities.

But even if such governmentality in control society is often articulated from the perspective of liberal freedom and inclusion, compared to previous political models of societal and urban planning, it is also argued from the same biopolitical premises that architecture – and, more broadly, the modification of space – can be utilized to exclude as well (Sassen, 2014). Here, an important point of reference is Giorgio Agamben, who continues Foucauldian biopolitics in a renewed way. Agamben's most famous works examine a very controversial architectural metaphor: the camp. For Agamben, the constitution of a political community in western political thought has always implied boundaries and exclusion. While this can be genealogically traced to bans and banishment as the most profound element of Western politics from Ancient Greece, its modern equivalent is a constitution of political camps that produce exceptions within "normal" society.

Whereas Foucault addresses the architecture of modern institutions such as prisons, schools, and hospitals as the paradigm for biopolitical inclusive

[17] The idea is elaborated especially in Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978.* Here Foucault identifies the architectural transformation from sovereign power towards a more complex urban dispositive functioning through the governmentality of environment and territory: "To summarize all this, let's say then that sovereignty capitalizes a territory, raising the major problem of the seat of government, whereas discipline structures a space and addresses the essential problem of a hierarchical and functional distribution of elements, and security will try to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events or possible elements, of series that will have to be regulated within a multivalent and transformable framework. The specific space of security refers then to a series of possible events; it refers to the temporal and the uncertain, which have to be inserted within a given space" (Foucault, 2008, p. 20).

governance, Agamben is interested in contemporary political spaces of exception and urban planning that, according to his controversial thesis, find their genealogical origins in "camp". From the *Reconcentración* camps in the Cuban Ten Years' War in the 19th century to concentration and exterior camps of Nazi Germany, exclusion as political relation also implies, according to Agamben, a concrete space of exception culminating in an architectural model of camp. Especially after the 9/11 shift in global politics, this logic of camp has been reinforced in refugee camps but also more broadly in the design of modern metropolises, leading to a situation where, according to Agamben, "today it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West (Agamben, 1998, p. 181).

While one must be careful not to take this as a literal statement about architecture, built environment, or physical spaces, it is nevertheless sufficient to say that how contemporary cities and buildings are being designed bears traces of camp-like conditions of exception, where "everything is possible" (Agamben, 1990, p. 170). Charlie Hailey (2009) has elaborated on Agamben's idea by suggesting that different forms of camp provide the best guide to 21st century spaces – an argument that one can to some extent affirm by visiting airports or other "non-places", as Marc Augé calls them (1995). Even in a limited sense, these insights suggest that power is both produced and operated through architecture and other spatial frameworks of society (see also Virilio, 2009). This does not mean, of course, that all spaces are like camps in a literal sense but instead that there are similarities in their governmental practices.

Much of the recent discussion concerning architecture's biopolitical political role seems to offer a mixture of Foucault's, Deleuze's, and Agamben's arguments. For example, Keller Easterling (2014), Hille Koskela (2000), and Stephen Graham (2010) emphasize how contemporary architecture and urbanism are responding to governmental and controlling practices in a society obsessed with risks and safety. The theme is relevant especially in understanding contemporary colonialized power structures. Leopold Lambert (2012) argues that architecture is utilized as a direct weapon in global colonial political struggles. In his seminal study on Israel's occupation of Gaza, Eyal Weizman (2007) in a similar way aims to show how architecture and urban design are utilized to oppress the Palestinian population and, on the other hand, help to construct and legitimize Israeli's urban settlements.[18]

Alongside colonial discourse, another important expansion of the (bio)political dimension of architecture has occurred in relation to gender and sexuality. For example, in *Pornotopia: An Essay on Playboy's Architecture and Biopolitics*, Paul Preciado claims that the production of gender, sexuality, and

[18] Based on Weizman's work, the research collective *Forensic Architecture*, formed at Goldsmiths, University of London, has attempted to understand how the production of architecture, design, and actual buildings can be taken to understand broader political themes such as colonization, how it happens, and what its direct impacts are on a given region and the people in it. To understand how we are being governed and how it is possible to dissent, we need to more carefully examine different architectural forms and practices as an active mode of governmentality, rather than simply considering them as external and passive containers for political ideologies to occur.

bodies is systematically linked to the biopolitical production of architecture (Preciado, 2014; see also Power, 2014).[19] Preciado takes the architecture and interior journalism of *Playboy* as a genealogical starting point for understanding the pivotal role between architecture and the production of gender in biopolitical capitalism. By examining the role of architecture, domesticity, and interior design in *Playboy* magazine, Preciado shows how gender and gender roles cannot be separated from the space they occupy. According to Preciado, *Playboy* produced a utopian space, or pornotopia, that made an ideal heterosexual masculinity possible:[20] "If you want to modify gender, transform architecture" (Preciado, 2014, 84).

Here we return to a Foucauldian notion: architecture as a form of modern governmentality is necessarily a political practice due to its keen relation to the biopolitical conceptualization of power. However, such power resides not only on the architectural surface in a monumental or symbolic manner. Instead, it appears throughout and is also simultaneously and constantly produced anew in relation to architecture and the living spaces of normality and abnormality.

2.2.3.2 Architectural dissidence from below

The second way to understand the relationship between architecture and politics in a relevant manner for this study can be traced to critical architectural practices from below (Borasi, 2016). Designing differently contests the dominant form of power and what is considered socially valuable (Crawford, 1991; Ward, 1997; Bell & Wakeford, 2008; Jones & Card, 2011; Karim, 2018), and as such it is an important and empowering practice for marginalized groups in society (Schalk, Kristiansson & Mazé, 2017; Hollmen, Reuter, & Sandman, 2018).

Jane Rendell suggests that such resistant aspects of architecture from below create "critical spatial practices" (2006). What especially feminist discussions of critical spatial practices have shown is that the critical political and social movements cannot be treated in isolation from the question of configuring a new type of space for new political agency (Matrix, 2022; Kern, 2020). Architecture is thus not only a tool for reproducing power relations but also a tool for inventing "more radical forms of politics and values", as Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal suggest (Petrescu & Trogal, 2017, p. 3). Jeremy Till, Tatjana Schneider, and Nishat Awan similarly argue:

[19] Regarding this, see also Kirsi Saarikangas' indispensable work (1993) on the biopolitical history of Finnish modernism and the production of gender and the heterosexual social matrix via architecture.

[20] However, it is important not to reduce this to plain chauvinistic architecture and Stone Age preferences (as is often the case in contemporary "man-cave" interior discourse). Quite the opposite, the *Playboy* architecture promoted a more complex architectural imaginary over gender (Power, 2014, p. 3). From this perspective, *Playboy* architecture can also be read as a genealogy of how the biopolitical governing techniques associated with "domesticity", historically utilized for the production of female sexuality, gender, and body, now ironically domesticate the alpha male. The playboy bachelor may be liberated from the spatial biopolitical code of the nuclear family, but he is not liberated from biopolitical domesticity and control of the body and sexuality in general.

> Adopting the feminist maxim ("the personal is political") buildings conjoin personal space and political space. In recognition of the role that architecture plays in part of (and it is only part of) the production of that social space, designers have to face up to the responsibility of affecting the social dynamics of others in ways beyond the delivery of beauty. The key political responsibility of the architect lies not in the refinement of the building as a static visual commodity, but as a contributor to the creation of empowering spatial, and hence social, relationships in the name of others. (Till, Schneider, & Awan, 2011, p. 38)

Such an understanding of critical practices is inspired by theories of emancipatory politics and disagreement mentioned earlier, which associate politics precisely with being critical towards consensus-oriented policies. Tahl Kaminer categorizes such practices as "architecture of radical democracy" (Kaminer 2017, p. 65). For Erik Swyngedouw, such types of "insurgent architecture" can "reconsider and re-articulate their allocated function and location within the partition of the sensible and the social and technical divisions of labour" (Swyngedouw, 2016, p. 49). Ines Weizman (2014) similarly utilizes a notion of "dissident architecture" understood precisely as dissidence from below and from the margins.

In this sense, architecture is not only limited to producing the form of power from above but can also be understood as a site of conflict and a mode of resistance from below as well. From this perspective, architectural practice can be understood as a continuous reconfiguration of shared spaces and social practices that produce resistance towards prevailing social relations and everyday life by introducing alternative social and political forms. Historically, for example, various forms of utopian communes have taken the production (and, more importantly, reproduction) of the living space as a pivotal site for rethinking political subjectivities and forms of collective life (Ungers & Ungers, 1972).

One important articulation and contemporary continuation of this trajectory has been done in relation to "urban commons" (on architectural commons, see especially Stavrides, 2016). Regarding the continuity of this tradition, we can also locate multiple recent architectural projects (such as the Assemble in Great Britain, the Raumlabor in Germany, the AAA (Atelier d'architecture autogérée) in France, Uusi Kaupunki in Finland) aiming at different kinds of approaches to revalue the value of maintaining and contributing to architecture and "social space". This challenges the orthodox idea that inhabitants are passive adaptors of political governmentality (Awan, Schneider, & Till, 2011; Cupers, 2013). For example, various temporary constructions, squatting, and places, spaces, and spontaneous activities shared by a community generate both economic and architectural value that is difficult to measure directly. They entail social and humane values and objectives from a wider perspective than the mainstream production of architecture (see also Hughes & Sadler, 2002; Hill, 2003, Blundell-Jones, Petrescu, & Till, 2005; Crawford, 2008; Jenkins & Forsyth, 2009; Harvey, 2012; Lehtovuori & Ruoppila, 2012; Tonkiss, 2014; Lydon & Garcia, 2015; Manzini & Coad, 2015; Stavrides, 2016).

2.2.3.3 Architecture and the "political"

The third important theoretical discussion regarding the relationship between architecture and politics is based on the nuances given to the concept of "politics" and "the political". In *Reconstructing Architecture: Critical Discourses and Social Practice's* (1998), Lian Mann and Thomas Dutton maintain that the problem of theorizing the relationship between architecture and society is that it considers the concept of politics in too narrow a way; in their opinion, what is needed is a shift from the organizational political impacts of architecture to thinking of architecture in relation to the *political* (see also Mann & Dutton, 2000).

Such a conceptualization builds heavily on the distinction between politics (*la politique*) and the political (*le politique*). The distinction is associated especially to Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe (for Mouffe's thought in architectural theory, see Hirsch & Miessen, 2012; Hatton, 2015). Mouffe proceeds to consider the political as an agonistic form "to be constitutive of human societies" (Mouffe, 2005, 8). Whereas "the manifold practices of conventional politics" is a question of administration and governmentality, Mouffe is interested in the *political* dealing with "ontological concerns the very way in which society is instituted" (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 8–9).

The notion of "the political" in architecture understood in a Mouffean sense is today primarily attributed to the work of Pier-Vittorio Aureli (Hatton, 2015, p. 14). In addition to Mouffe, Aureli's influences range from Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt to Giorgio Agamben – approaches that emphasize the importance of distinguishing politics from other areas of society. Politics is "political" because it is not social or economic. In a similar way, for Aureli "the political" in architecture cannot be social or economic.

As mentioned in the beginning of this study, for Aureli the problem with reformist architectural strategies, in which architecture is merely a platform for societal development, is that they are closer to politics in an administrative sense rather than political in agonistic sense. Therefore, for architecture to be political, it needs to be agonistically separated from the external framework that surrounds it:

> If politics is agonism through separation and confrontation, it is precisely in the process of separation inherent in the making of architectural form that the political in architecture lies, and thus the possibility of understanding the agonistic relationship between architecture and its context. The very condition of architectural form is to separate and to be separated. (Aureli, 2011, p. ix)

Furthermore, this implies a distinction between urban planning and architecture. For Aureli, urbanization is part of a broader form of governance; on the contrary, architecture is an agonistic political form against general urbanization that maintains the existing status quo. Here Aureli's influence from Agamben is evident. The urbanization emerges at the same time, when, according to Agamben, the *polis*, the political association of free men, becomes replaced by governmental practices originally traced to the sphere of the *oikos*, the governmentality of the household, opposed to the political life of the *polis* and

closer to what later came to be understood as the economy (Agamben, 2011). Whereas architecture deals with the constitution of the space of the polis (as the original definition of a political "city"), urbanization no longer deals with the polis with its strict boundaries distinguishing the uniqueness of political activity from other areas of life. Here, a pivotal reverence is the *urbs*, a conceptualization of city traceable to the Roman Empire:

> The Roman Empire, by contrast, can be described as an insatiable network in which the empire's diversity became an all-inclusive totality. This totality was the settlement process that originated in the logic of the *urb*s. The *urbs*, in contrast to the insular logic of the Greek *polis*, represents the expansionist and inclusive logic of the Roman territories. The Romans used the term *urbs* to designate the idea of Rome because, in their expansionist logic, Rome was the universal symbolic template for the whole inhabited space of the empire. Thus, *urbs* came to designate a universal and generic condition of cohabitation, which is why, as we will see later, it was used by the "inventor" of urbanism, Ildefons Cerdà, to replace the term *ciudad*, which he found too restrictive because it referred to "city"—to the political and symbolic condition of *civita*s. (Aureli, 2011, pp. 5–6)

The emergence of urbanization is at the same time the end of politics and the loss of architecture, if we accept Aureli's controversial thesis that architecture responds originally only to the political life of the *polis* rather than the administration of *urbs*. Later on, the idea of urbanization in the modern world becomes an integral part of the "social" that replaces "politics", as Hannah Arendt alongside Agamben has suggested. For Arendt, the emergence of the social means, among other things, the destruction of architecture, in its classical sense understood as the constitution of distinguished personal spatial frameworks in which political life can unfold in spaces in-between (Teerds, 2014). According to Aureli:

> The process of urbanization transcends not only the difference between public and private, but also any difference that matters politically, such as the difference between built space and open space, or between what Arendt identified as the three spheres of the human condition: labor, work, and "vita activa." (Aureli, 2011, p. 16)

The birth of the social and the dominance of the oikos in Arendt's and Agamben's theories ultimately assume the withdrawal of the boundaries that constitute the space in-between that makes politics possible (Aureli & Tattara, 2017). Similarly, for Aureli the possibility of political architecture is linked to the question whether different architectural forms can operate in this space in-between and reject the generalizing logic of the social, economy, and urban.

The argument is elaborated further in Aureli's *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism* (2008), in which Aureli discusses mainly Italian autonomous approaches to architecture and politics, from Manfredo Tafuri's seminal contribution to Aldo Rossi and new autonomous architectural groups such as *Superstudio*. Here, the political potentiality of architecture is linked to its antagonistic autonomous position towards society rather than a return to pure architecture, as was the case in autonomous

architecture in the 1970s. As Aureli puts it, at stake is autonomous architecture for the political (*le politique*) rather than autonomous architecture from politics (2018, p. 12)

A key reference for Aureli here is the Italian architect Aldo Rossi, who aims to think of architectural autonomy without any connection to external urban planning ideologies. For architecture to be political in this sense, it needs to create spaces of agonism towards this urbanization; it needs to stand against the urbanization as autonomous architectural islands in the sea of urbanization.

Following Mouffe, Agamben, Arendt, and also Carl Schmitt, Aureli maintains that "the political occurs in the decision of how to articulate the relationship, the *infra* space, the space in between" (Aureli, 2011, p. 27). From this perspective, architectural production needs not to engage with society directly but to produce autonomous and antagonist forms towards it.

2.2.3.4 Building hegemony: Politics through architecture

While Aureli's project has offered more nuances to understand the scope of "the political" in relation to architecture, it has been also argued that there is a risk that such conceptualization reduces politics to a pure form and autonomy, which ultimately makes transformative political strategies for architecture practically impossible (see, for example, Andreotti, 2016; Spencer, 2016b). Even if Aureli, compared to earlier autonomous theorists (Colin Rowe, Charles Jencks, Peter Eisenman), aims to defend architecture's political agency based on its political autonomy (and here Aureli's conceptualization of autonomy is closer to Italian Marxism), there is nevertheless a similar sense of powerlessness (or Agambenian inoperativeness present in his architectural politics, as outlined by Tafuri and Adorno earlier.

However, we can also identify an alternative theoretical trajectory that does not consider architecture to be an autonomous political form but instead a medium that makes a deliberate intervention towards the prevailing social relations. For example, David Cunningham suggests:

> If architecture's specifically modern identity cannot be disentangled from this ineliminable engagement with, and subjection to, the social and spatial forms of the metropolis, it is, historically, this very fact that has suggested – whether in its Corbusian or more revolutionary forms – that architectural practice might somehow be rendered *immediately* "political" in its effects (at least by comparison to the other "arts"), insofar as it intersects with what I take to be *the* basic question of modern politics itself: that is, what are the possibilities for collective transformation of the social, and under what conditions do they operate? To talk of architectural politics, in its strongest sense, is thus, as the history of the twentieth-century avant-garde makes clear, to talk about the ways in which architectural practice and knowledge mediate, and are reciprocally mediated by, such current possibilities for what David Harvey terms "a collective power over the processes of urbanisation". (Cunningham, 2014, p. 12)

The point is not to think of architecture as isolated from the urban and the economy. Instead, the purpose is to make critical intervention towards the prevailing logic of urbanization via alternative architectural proposals. Here especially the

recent work by Nadir Lahiji is indispensable (Lahiji, 2012, 2014a, 2016, 2019, 2020). Lahiji aims to redefine architecture's "emancipatory project" as an "invention of future in the present" (Lahiji, 2019, p. 33). For Lahiji especially, 20th century modernist utopianism that attempted to "translate political manifestos into architectural manifestos" (Lahiji 2019, p. 33) can be taken as a point of departure. The utopianism of modernist architectural avant-garde as it was elaborated in Constructivism, Le Corbusier, the Bauhaus, and Red Vienna, to name the most important, not only followed broader political upheavals but were also an active mediation of latent socio-political struggles over political hegemony in built forms.[21]

As Lahiji shows, the architecture of so-called "Red Vienna" and the widely discussed Karl Marx-Hof building complex provides an especially interesting example of this. Built between 1927–1930 with the principle of *Gemeindebauten (*municipal apartment blocks), Karl Marx-Hof sought to envision what socialist life could mean in practice. Accompanying nearly 1,400 apartments as well as a school, library, health centre, and other communal facilities, the architectural project was directly linked to a broader political project of rethinking new decommodified social relations (see also Blau, 1999).

However, if we follow Lahiji, the building was not only a result of socialist social policies. Instead, it revealed a broader locus of politics in the 20th century: that of everyday life and its space. In the 1934 Austrian fascist uprising, the Heimwher (Austrian fascist paramilitary troops) stormed the Karl Marx-Hof complex as well as other socialist apartment blocks. Lahiji takes this as a convincing example of where politics is located: "Their choice of target – a social housing project rather than a political party headquarters – was significant, and it is meaning suggestive of a distinct, twentieth-century political subjectivity" (Lahiji, 2019, pp. 43–44). This deciphers a broader tendency, where in the 20th century "much of the antagonism of class struggle was directed at architecture in the form of social housing projects" (Lahiji, 2019, pp. 43–44).

In a similar way, for example, Beatriz Colomina (2014) and Mark Wigley (1998) have suggested that from the modernist architectural avant-garde onwards, the questions of architecture's political efficacy has been linked to the change of the medium of architecture itself rather than advocating external political goals.

This emphasis can be found also in Fredric Jameson's seminal essay "Architecture and the critique of ideology" that considers architecture as one of the most important areas of cultural struggles over hegemony. According to Jameson, architecture is not a mere reflection of broader relations of production, that is, the economic power structures in each society. Instead, it is a way to articulate the internal contradiction within these relations and hence a way to identify possible political change. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's concepts of

[21] Regarding this, see also Barbara Miller-Lane's *Architecture and Politics in Germany* (1968). Studying post-WWI Germany, the study highlights how architecture was an important ideological tool for both socialist movements of the Weimar Republic through modernist architecture, such as the Bauhaus and Ernst May's New Frankfurt, and later in Nazi-era architecture combining classical motives and German traditionalism.

hegemony and counter-hegemony, Jameson suggests that it is possible to consider architectural counter-hegemonies as political enclaves within the prevailing mode of production:

> Such figures suggest something like an *enclave* theory of social transition, according to which the emergent future, the new and still nascent social relations that announce a mode of production that will ultimately displace and subsume the as yet still dominant one, is theorized in terms of small yet strategic pockets or beachheads within the older system. The essentially *spatial* nature of the characterization is no accident and conveys something like a historical tension between two radically different types of space, in which the emergent yet more powerful kind will gradually extend its influence and dynamism over the older form. (Jameson, 2000, p. 453)

Related to this, Jameson mentions in particular Le Corbusier's famous manifesto *Towards a New Architecture*, which sets forth the iconic question between "architecture or revolution". Whereas Le Corbusier's dichotomy is often interpreted as a conformist and reformist statement that architecture can be taken to prevent political revolution, according to Jameson there exists a more complex argument regarding social transformation and even "cultural revolution" through architecture:

> Le Corbusier, for example, spoke of avoiding political revolutions, not because he was not committed to "revolution," but rather because he saw the construction and the constitution of new space as the most revolutionary act, one that could "replace" the narrowly political revolution of the mere seizure of power (and if the experience of a new space is associated with a whole transformation of everyday life itself, Le Corbusier's seemingly antipolitical stance can be reread as an *enlargement* of the very conception of the political, and as having an anticipatory kinship with conceptions of "cultural revolution" that are far more congenial to the spirit of the contemporary Left). (Jameson, 2000, p. 454)

Aside from Le Corbusier's own personal political views, it is evident that he acknowledges that it is architecture, housing, and everyday life that constitute the most privileged form of 20th century class struggle (see also Lahiji, 2020). As such, it is politics beyond external political representation; the political change happens not through architecture but through the modification of architecture itself.

What is evident in theories emphasizing "cultural revolution" as a pivotal sphere of politics is that its conceptualization of politics is primarily linked to the leftist political spectrum. The study, however, does not suggest that there would not exist similar conservative or right-wing spatial configurations of politics (even if not primarily analysed here). On the contrary, while it is not the primary concern of this study, it is precisely the conservative political uses of architecture that have become most successful. Politically speaking, for instance, the defences of classical vernacularism against modernism (see, for example, Scruton, 1995) are often defences of conservative worldviews with Eurocentric, masculine, and anti-democratic views.

A recent trajectory of this can be found in the emergence of metapolitical discourse that is often understood as a right-wing counterpart for cultural revolution. Metapolitics is often defined as meta-level discussion over the values that constitute shared cultural and political identities and the hegemonical framework of society. Regarding architecture's role in metapolitics, the recent work by Stephan Trüby (2020) is important. Trüby has shown how especially the so-called alt-right attempts to reclaim the classical architectural canon and its conceptualization of the "western tradition" in a metapolitical manner. According to Trüby, traditional architecture (often defined as everything non-modern) is increasingly utilized as a form of metapolitics working with historical traditions associated with Eurocentrism.

In this manner, traditionalist architecture is mobilized for the construction and configuration of identities that aim to justify the superiority of the "white race", traditional values, and Christianity as authentic roots of Western culture now under threat. While this is not the central focus of this study, I would argue that it supports the main argument of the work, namely, that political uses of architecture are not limited to symbolism and representations.

3 ARCHITECTURE AND POLITICAL THEORY

> On the whole I am constantly surprised by the little importance given to urban questions in the university. The number of chairs of urbanism are rather limited, a few in Paris and even fewer in the provinces. In contrast to traditional teaching, it's nothing. Yet it's about a more important question. It isn't just a question of culture, of activity, of productivity, of adaptation and of understanding of the modem world. I tried when I was in the university to introduce urban questions into teaching. I was usually told that it was a matter for schools of architecture. On the other hand, courses in sociology and history which leave aside urban questions seem ludicrous, it's like taking away their very substance. (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 215)

> My problem has always been to escape the division between disciplines because what interests me is the position of the distribution of territories, which is always a way of deciding who is qualified to speak about what. (Rancière, 2008, p. 3)

3.1 Architecture and political theory

The constitutions of political life, political community, and political experience are spatial by their nature: social relations are maintained and contested through the production of space. This study asserts that architecture, understood broadly, provides privileged access to understanding such spatial configurations of politics and is hence relevant for the study of political theory as well.

As already maintained, the research aims not to define what political architecture is, nor to give an overall definition of its history, nor to be an inquiry into a range of contemporary political practices. Instead, the research is more broadly interested in different conceptualizations of architectural politics and how inquiries from the point of view of political theory can be useful to grasp this.

What is political theory? Compared to more empirical and data-oriented political science, political theory is understood here as a conceptual approach towards the scope and meaning of politics itself (Dryzek, Honig, & Phillips, 2008). How is it related to architecture? In short, examining architecture from the point

of view of political theory helps us to see not only architecture but also politics in a new light (Bell & Zacka, 2020). As Duncan Bell and Bernardo Zacka propose in recent *Political Theory and Architecture*, it is time for political theory and political science to fully take into consideration that "architecture is not merely a backdrop to political life but a political force in its own right" (Bell & Zacka, 2020, p. 1). For Bell and Zacka, the political analysis of architecture is not limited to political uses of architecture or the political motives behind it. Instead, our understanding of "politics can be enriched by a closer attention to the built environment" (Bell & Zacka, 2020, p. 1). [22]

An interesting example of how to examine the relationship between political theory and architecture through a single political theorist is made by Camillo Boano in his project investigating the relevance of Giorgio Agamben's political thought for contemporary architecture, which also provides fruitful methodological insights for this study. For Boano, Agamben is a political theorist whose thinking does not primarily (or even in any substantial way) address the problem of architecture. However, as Boano suggests, architecture read from the point of view of political theory "helps in providing a way of looking at urban and spatial practices; a way of framing and understanding that is not simply instrumental but political and ethical, identifying counter-practices and being able to see architecture and urbanism again in a renewed orientation and perspective" (Boano, 2017, p. 6).

3.1.1 Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Rancière

The study and especially the research articles examine the configuration of politics through architecture from the point of view of three political thinkers: Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Rancière. In Chapter 4, I will discuss their thinking and its further relevance for the general scope of this study. Before this, I will say something about the reasons why the study discusses this trio in particular.

By focusing on the works by Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Rancière, the research aims to further elaborate the key argument made in the study, namely, that politics is primarily about the spatial configuration and reconfiguration of existing social relations and that it is architecture which provides important access to analysing such spatial dimensions of politics. Here again, this does not mean that the contributions by these thinkers regarding this theme are unique: for example, Mustafa Dikeç (2015) approaches the same questions utilizing Rancière but also Hannah Arendt and Jean Luc-Nancy. Similarly, the influences from Michel Foucault or Chantal Mouffe for spatial politics are central, to name just a few.

Why have I precisely chosen these three thinkers, given that there is even a dispute whether one can consider Benjamin and Lefebvre primarily as political theorists? Rancière himself often outlines his reluctancy to be labelled a political

[22] Recent collected volumes such as *Architecture, Society, and Politics* (Cairns, 2016) or *This Thing Called Theory* (Stoppani, Ponzo, & Themistokleous, 2016) similarly attempt to put political theory and architecture into dialogue.

theorist. As mentioned already, the most important interlinking aspect – and the reason to discuss their work in comparison in this work – is their spatial emphasis of politics and the examination of it in relation to architecture.

The research applies this to architecture in particular by looking how their conceptualization of politics embedded in art and architecture is not limited to a representational idea of external politics. As such, their political thought provides an alternative to what is called the representational logic of political architecture in this study.

From his early work onward (think, for example, of *Toward the Critique of Violence*) Benjamin aims to understand political experience that would not be based on a representation of a political institution (such as the law or nation-state). Instead, Benjamin is more interested in various spatio-temporal constellations that can alter political experience. In his later work in particular, Benjamin conceptualizes this in relation to the political tendencies of artistic forms and techniques. Rather than thinking of artistic forms as representations of external political ideologies, the more important question is whether those forms can critically reconfigure political experience and hence expand our relationship to existing social relations. In Article A1, this is examined from the point of view of architecture.

Lefebvre advances a similar idea even more clearly regarding architecture and the production of space. For Lefebvre, politics happens not only in space but through space. As Lefebvre suggests, to fully understand the political role that architecture and the built environment play, one needs to move from "symbolic representations" of architecture (Lefebvre 1991, p. 32) towards the production of social relations through architecture.

Rancière warns of confusing politics of aesthetics and art with clear representations of external political ideologies. Instead, for Rancière there exist alternative conceptualizations of politics embedded in artistic practices. While Rancière does not discuss this in the context of architecture as much as Benjamin and Lefebvre, his remarks on the politics of architecture construed in this work and presented with critical commentary guide us to look at the political dimension of architecture from a renewed perspective, in a similar way as the relationship between art and politics in general.

3.2 Methodological insights: Architecture and visual politics

Methodologically, this study belongs to the field of visual politics, which attempts to understand the role that visual images and visual artefacts play in shaping and constituting political community and social relations. Visuality has a key role, of course, in contemporary politics. From the mediated imagery of world politics to micropolitics in social media, politics is increasingly shaped by images and other visual artefacts. However, while there is little doubt about the key role that visuality plays in our contemporary political experience, its

significance is hard to grasp if the methodological emphasis is not on the visuality itself.

Regarding this, one of the long-standing debates in the study of visual politics is whether visual representations are mere mimetic reflections or constructive in themselves. [23] The study follows Ronald Bleiker's (2018) suggestion that the politics generated and mediated by visual material data cannot be fully understood by utilizing methodologies primarily attached to an analysis of written and textual discourse. The problem identified by Bleiker is the difficulty to read and understand politics of visual data, as political images and visual artefacts are not limited to plain representations of (textual) political discourse but political forces that produce the scope of politics (Bleiker, 2018, p. 1).

Alongside Bleiker, the peculiar nature of visual politics is emphasized by Mike Shapiro. In his *Studies in Trans-Disciplinary Method: After the Aesthetic Turn* (2012), Shapiro pays attention to the differences of studying visual culture compared to research settings where the "data" is more fixed and exists mainly in written discourses. When the data is visual culture such as cinema, image, media, or architecture, the analysis of it is necessarily contingent. As Shapiro maintains, in the fields of visual research data cannot be treated as a positivist warehouse from which to extract something with fixed concepts, methods, and theories. For Shapiro, in a similar way as for Bleiker, this is linked to the tendency in political science to think of political representations embedded in visual culture merely as mimetic. According to Shapiro, visual representations do not only reflect or describe political reality but actively and constantly construct one anew (Shapiro, 1988). From this perspective, the task is primarily to "think" anew of the constitution of politics and political experience through visual culture rather than to "explain" and "reproduce" the external politics operating through visual representations (Shapiro, 2012, p. xv).

In this regard, both Shapiro and Bleiker, to name just a few, outline a typical trope implicit in the study of visual politics mentioned earlier: to study visual politics, visual images also comprise an attempt to expand the understanding of politics. Following this, the study aims to move from the politics of representation to the representation of politics (Steyerl, 2012; Thrift, 2007). Instead of simply taking representations as mere reflections, the study methodologically follows an approach in which these representations are constantly configured and produced anew in visual forms (Mitchell, 1994).

What does this mean in the context of architecture? Throughout the study, I have been informed by, for instance, Andrew Benjamin's insights on how to interpret architecture from theoretical and philosophical points of view. As Benjamin notes, "philosophy tends to reduce the visual arts and architecture to a body of examples. Work is deployed as evidence for a particular argument or

[23] Consider, for example, the discussion in *The Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*: "Throughout history, debates about representation have considered whether representations reflect the world as it is, mirroring it back to us through mimesis or imitation, or whether we construct the world and its meaning through representations" (Cartwright & Sturken, 2001, p. 112).

example of a more generalized movement" (Benjamin, 2000, p. viii). Such reading assumes that broader theoretical questions attached to architecture are ultimately external to architectural practice itself and that they need to be solved in external philosophical or theoretical discourse.

Compared to an approach in which architecture is "tested" with fixed methods, theory, and philosophy or reduced to it, Benjamin inverts this setting – challenging the approach where architecture is subordinated to philosophy and theory – by asking what happens when "the reductive motive is refused, and the constraint is having to think the particularity of architectural?" (Benjamin, 2000, p. viii).

Following the methodological insights from visual politics, the analysis of visual artefacts such as architecture is not limited to identifying their relationship to external political representations. The aim of this study is to establish a transdisciplinary connection between architectural thought and political theory to grasp this. Paraphrasing the political thought of Rancière, the political dimension of architecture needs not only to be explained with theoretical interpretations and the existing methodology of the social sciences. Instead, more important is to look at the integral political dimension of architecture and how it requires more nuanced ways of analysing this intertwinement.[24]

3.3 Research material: Modernism, avant-garde and utopias

Even if the dissertation does not aim to study the politics of architecture empirically, frequent architectural examples are given throughout the study. Most of the examples discussed can be situated in the genealogy of modern architecture, avant-gardist cultural politics, and their utopian manifestations in particular.

The examples discussed in the work might sound a bit retrograde. Why does the study not focus on the contemporary and most urgent political debates on architecture directly related to climate disaster or neoliberal urban politics, for example? On the other hand, why does the study not discuss the relationship between architecture and politics before the modern era? Is the focus on modernism and its contemporary afterlife the only way of linking architecture and politics together? Is it not precisely modernism that invented the idea of the "master builder" – architect as individualistic hero above politics – such as Philip Johnson or the one fictionally pictured in Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead?*

To answer such quarrels, I emphasize that architectural modernism in this work is not limited to historic era or artistic style. I do not primarily approach modernism by identifying single key buildings in the tradition by renowned

[24] "The political dimension of literature has been usually explained through social science and political interpretation. By turning matters upside-down, I have been unwilling to account for politics and social sciences through the mere transformations of poetical categories. My wish has been simply to propose a closer look at their intertwinings" (Rancière, 2015, p. 176).

modern architects. Instead, modernism as an empirical and historical point of reference is analysed here conceptually by emphasizing how there emerges a particular connection between architecture and politics. I am aware that the connection between architecture and politics is age-old, but in the particular sense, it is precisely modern architecture that takes the integral political dimension of architecture into considerations in a structural way (Giedion, 1982; see also Conrads, 1971; Cohen, 2012).

As renowned historian of modern architecture Kenneth Frampton has shown in his seminal history of modern architecture, one of the most defining conceptual characters of architectural modernism is its socio-economic context and ideological function (Frampton, 1985). For Frampton modernism changed the representation of political ideology in built form from ornamental, monumental, and other symbolic manifestations of power towards a more complex notion of power, ideology, and politics (Frampton, 1985, pp. 240–254). Even if the direct references to external political ideologies did not entirely disappear, it is nevertheless clear that what is characteristic to politics of modern architecture in its uses across the political spectrum (Soviet communist constructivism, Social democratic Neues Bauen, Italian fascist rationalism, or the liberal International style developed in the US) suggests that architecture not only represents politics but instead aims to change society through design.

Such a conceptual approach to the political dimension of modernism can be found in widely circulated readings and introductions to modern architecture. In his canonical account to the history of modern architecture published for the first time already in 1941, Sigfried Giedion (1982) outlines that modern architecture aims to realize a new conceptualization and experience of space for its own time. Beyond mere style or ornamentation of external political forces, architecture, from modernism onwards, is thus linked to the broader production of spatial relations of society. K. Michael Hays similarly suggests that "modernism, whatever we may mean by the term, has something to do with the emergence of new kinds of objects and events and, at the same time, new conceptualizations of their appearance, of the changed event structures and relationship between objects, their producers, their audiences, and consumers" (Hays, 1992, p. 4). Hilde Heynen argues that it is precisely from modern architecture onwards that architecture's potentiality to be a political medium is considered to "articulate in a very specific way the contradictions and ambiguities that modern life confronts us with" (Heynen, 1999, p. 7).

In Marshall Berman's famous account, which also goes beyond architecture, the reflection of "modernity" is first and foremost an experience of the transformation of the world and the change of subjectivity through it:

> There is a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils – that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience 'modernity'. To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. (Berman, 1983, p. 15)

With such a definition elaborated in the 1980s, during the dusk of "actually existing" modernism, Berman aimed to show that modernism was inherent also in the postmodern era.

What is proposed in this work is that when it comes to linking architecture and politics together, such a notion of modernism still characterizes our contemporary experience. For us, it indeed promises the transformation of the world while simultaneously threatening to destroy everything we have; the popularity of the work by Pritzker 2021 winners Lacaton and Vassal provides a great example of this in the context of climate disaster. Here it is interesting to point out that the Pritzker jury even made a deliberate connection between the politics of Lacaton and Vassal and earlier utopian projects of modernist architecture with a strong social and political mission:

> Not only have they [Lacaton and Vassal] defined an architectural approach that renews the legacy of modernism, but they have also proposed an adjusted definition of the very profession of architecture. The modernist hopes and dreams to improve the lives of many are reinvigorated through their work that responds to the climatic and ecological emergencies of our time, as well as social urgencies, particularly in the realm of urban housing. They accomplish this through a powerful sense of space and materials that creates architecture as strong in its forms as in its convictions, as transparent in its aesthetic as in its ethics. At once beautiful and pragmatic, they refuse any opposition between architectural quality, environmental responsibility, and the quest for an ethical society. ("World Architecture Community", 2021)

By emphasizing the conceptual significances of modernism, the study aims to unravel historical articulations of art and politics that remain relevant even today, while being aware of its limitations.[25] Modernist ideas of linking architecture and politics therefore can and should be interpreted from multiple perspectives; the idea that society can be changed through design can be both defended and challenged.

Thus, while in empirical terms contemporary debates about architecture are naturally far beyond modernism, the specific conceptual relationship between architecture and politics can be still dated to modernism or what Rancière calls the aesthetic regime of art. In this regard, the contemporary concerns over climate disaster, the future of living, and ecological reconstruction are thus themes that cannot be understood without references to a similar type of political issues elaborated a century ago concerning the emergence of modernist architecture and its position vis-à-vis broader avant-gardist cultural politics.

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[25] Here it however needs to be added that this is the case mainly in Western culture. In the study, it is widely accepted that while focusing solely on the tradition of modernism and its afterlife, the focus is awkwardly Eurocentric. In *The Responsible Object: A History of Design Ideology for the Future*, Marjanne van Helvert reminds that "many examples of what we call social design also, though perhaps unconsciously, build on western traditions of idealistic, ideological, utopian, sometimes noble-minded and sometimes quite patronizing or even neocolonial design solutions of the past century" (van Helvert, 2016, p. 13). Recent decolonial investigations of modern architecture (see, for example, Cheng, Davis, & Wilson, 2020) have also suggested that the history of modern architecture is not universal by nature. Instead, there are racial hierarchies and forms of domination present.

Moreover, to avoid other connotations related to modern architecture I emphasize that the conceptual connection between architecture and politics under modernism applies in particular to practices that can be labelled as avant-garde. I am aware that in art history avant-garde and modernism are sometimes seen as even opposite positions in the 20th century socio-cultural fabric (Bürger, 1984). However, here I emphasize their merging and understand avant-garde as a "particular inflection of modernism that emphasized the struggle of new artistic tendencies for legitimacy in ways that drew inspiration from modern forms of political organizations and activities" (Miller, 2014, p. 2).

What certain socio-historical texts on avant-garde typically suggest is that, compared to modern art in general, avant-garde also stands at the fore of articulating new political conjuncture in its aleatoriness (Poggioli, 1981; Bürger, 1984; Hobsbawm 1995; White, 2106). For many, it is precisely such a conceptual model of avant-garde that remains relevant today when discussing the actuality of modern art (Léger, 2012). For example, Gabriel Rockhill has suggested that it is precisely the legacy of modern architectural avant-garde, from the Bauhaus and constructivism onwards, that shows us what "transforming the aesthetic experience of everyday life" means (Rockhill 2014a, p. 131).

In a related manner, Peter Osborne has proposed that our understanding of the concept of contemporary in contemporary art – and its social and political function in particular – can be contextualized to the tradition and continuum of 20th century modernism and its avant-gardist variations, such as constructivism (2015).

John Roberts (2015) in turn concludes his reading of the actuality of avant-garde that it is only by acknowledging the tradition of modernism and historical avant-garde that contemporary art and architecture can constitute politically meaningful forms of challenging the existing status quo.

In this sense, the relationship between architecture and politics in the context of modernism, from the debates of "classical avant-garde" to contemporary practices, bear a utopian vocation: that society can and needs to be changed through design. Compared to classical architectural utopias (Morrison, 2015), architectural modernism and avant-garde – for better or worse – take the organization and reconstruction of everyday life rather than abstract geometrical ideals as the driving utopian force for transformative politics.

While the relationship between architecture and utopias is also age-old, there is more specific meaning to be found in the contexts of modernism, avant-garde, and what Rancière calls the aesthetic regime of art. The study claims that such utopian aspiration is also inherent in Benjamin's, Lefebvre's, and Rancière's critical reading of avant-garde, modernism, and their political fabric. At stake is not an abstract utopian horizon after the revolution has occurred in the vague harmonious future but the configuration of new political space in the present through and against the existing social relations embedded in space, the built environment, and architecture.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

4.1 Walter Benjamin

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework of the study, which is further analysed in the research articles. First, I discuss the role of architecture in Walter Benjamin's (1892–1940) political thought. Benjamin is known for his indispensable work on cultural criticism, aesthetic theory, and expansions of Marxist historical materialism concerning themes related to arts and culture. Benjamin's work has profoundly influenced later cultural studies and readings on the intersections of arts and politics, especially in the fields of photography and cinema. Alongside cinema and photography, the relationship between architecture, urban space, visual arts, and politics is one of the long-standing themes in Benjamin's work. This culminates, of course, in the famous figure of Flâneur, which reflects the spatial experience of urban modernity like no other.

Before going into further analysis, it needs to be mentioned that my reading of Benjamin here is slightly selective. It does not discuss themes such as Judaism, mysticism, and the critique of historical progress, which were central especially in the works of so-called early Benjamin but which also appeared in Benjamin's final essays, such as "On the concept of history", originally written in 1940.

As such, my reading covers only one side of Benjamin's thought, which Gershom Scholem famously characterized as Janus-faced. My reading focuses especially on texts in which were central Benjamin's influences from Marx and historical materialism on the one hand and progressive conceptualization of new artistic technologies on the other. It is also in these texts, circa from 1928 to 1936, in which the connection between architecture and politics is most evident in Benjamin's thought. In these texts, the frequent references to architecture and its role in shaping the political dimension of the modern world are an integral part of Benjamin's broader project investigating the political significance of mass-reproducible arts, the experience of urban life, and the structural crisis of the capitalist mode of production in the beginning of the 20th century (Hartoonian, 2010).

What the study proposes that in these texts, Benjamin takes the questions of urban space, housing, dwelling, and architecture into the centre of his analysis, especially from a perspective that highlights a modern form of living that is by nature collective and urban. As such, Benjamin's approach has provided an important antidote to the ahistorical philosophical reflections of individual dwelling often still characterized by a rural form of life being a somewhat authentic way to understand the philosophical problem concerning the relationship between the human being, dwelling, and the earth.[26] Instead, for Benjamin, philosophy is directly associated with the urban experience of modernity (Richter, 2016; Gilloch, 1996).[27]

Additionally, and contrary especially to many other critical theorists close to him, Benjamin does not consider modern urban experience to be mediated by new forms of mass art (most importantly cinema, photography, radio, graphic design, and modern architecture) as something that has alienated us in the era of capitalist modernity. Even if Benjamin acknowledges that new artistic technologies have a pivotal function in capitalist rationalization and modernization, he also proceeds to consider their emancipatory potentiality; for Benjamin, they hold potentiality to develop new sensorial configurations that would enable the new collective political agency to emerge from the conditions of modernity (Benjamin, 2005).

Regarding this, the purpose of this study is to focus on Benjamin's texts in the 1930s that aim to analyse the connection between art and politics in the era of mass technology, political masses, and the struggle between communist and fascist movements (often referred to as late Benjamin and Benjamin's Brechtian era). In the article "Marxist and Modernist: Walter Benjamin's Encounter with the Architectural Avant-Garde" (A1), this is addressed through the connection between Marxism and architectural modernism in Benjamin's thought. In this introductory part, I will contextualize the scope of the article in relation to two different strains that remain important for fully understanding Benjamin's argumentation.

The first, and the better known, is his examination of art, culture, and technology from a Marxist perspective. The second, which I consider perhaps

[26] Benjamin's position can be contrasted especially against philosophical approaches to architecture from a nostalgic perspective. Here, one pivotal point of reference is Martin Heidegger's reflections on space, architecture, and dwelling against modernity (Heidegger, 1971).

[27] Benjamin's own life merges with this urban experience as he struggled as a precarious freelance writer in European metropolises that, in a similar way as today, oppress people mainly through the cost of living and poor housing conditions (for biographical details, see Eiland and Jennings, 2014). The precarious existence defined Benjamin's academic career as well. Benjamin spent his entire career as an outsider of professional academic philosophy and instead engaged in theory through journalism, literary essays, culture, and critique, among others. Rather than building any strict philosophical system, Benjamin's work is characterized by an eclectic combination of different theories, themes, and theoretical traditions. A precarious academic nomad with a rootless existence, Benjamin relocated himself constantly between European metropolises such as Berlin and Paris, also including a brief stay in Moscow and other places that were also integral for his philosophical and political thought. For the important connection between Benjamin's life and his thought, see Gerhard Richter's *Walter Benjamin and the Corpus of Autobiography* (2000).

even more important, is Benjamin's influence from avant-garde culture and modernist artistic practices, in which art not only transmits and represents external politics but more properly is politics itself.

4.1.1 Art, technology and politics

Benjamin's political thought can be contextualized in relation to Marxism and seen as especially close to thinkers associated with critical theory, in and on the outskirts of the Frankfurt School Institute for Social Research. These include, for example, Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Leo Löwenthal, Ernst Bloch, Friedrich Pollock, and Siegfried Kracauer. The key idea shared by the Frankfurt School scholars and associates is that the capitalist mode of production and social relations generated by it cannot be studied solely from the perspective of economic analysis.

The ideas of the Frankfurt School and critical theory are often also associated with a broader strain of "Western Marxism" to emphasize their difference from "actually existing socialism" and orthodox interpretations of Marxism in the USSR (see Anderson, 1976). Frankfurt School scholars emphasized the changing nature of capitalism: the production of culture and its integral technologies, such as new forms of mass media, play a central role in understanding the production of alienation and subjectivities under a more complex capitalist mode of production no longer limited only to industrial production.

To fully understand how prevailing social and power relations function and are reproduced, the capitalist mode of production needs to be approached from the point of view of its broader cultural dimension. Instead, the task is to analyse how capitalism shapes and organizes the human experience in a broad sense (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 238). Martin Jay (1996) calls this "dialectical imagination", which promotes a comprehensive critical analysis of society simultaneously from multiple perspectives, ranging from Marxism and sociology to psychoanalysis and (what later became known as) cultural studies.

Even if Benjamin was not a direct member of the school but mainly one of its associates, it is often suggested that such an eclectic form of Marxism between economy and culture is most present precisely in Benjamin's work (Benjamin, 1999, p. 460; Missac, 1995). Similarly to other theorists associated to the Frankfurt School, Benjamin's adaption of Marx was largely influenced by György Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (originally published in 1923). Benjamin read the book during his stay in Capri in 1924. The trip to Capri is utilized often in Benjamin scholarship to illustrate the difference between the earlier esoteric Benjamin and later Marxist Benjamin (see Eiland & Jennings, 2014, p. 200).

In the book, Lukács proposes that the notion of alienation, a central theme in both Hegelian and Marxist thought, ought to be understood not only as a direct process of economic exploitation but as broader alienation from the essence of human nature. In short, human existence under capitalist modernity is reified existence for Lukács. Reification for Lukács refers to a development through which the capitalist mode of production turns every relationship into thing-like

objects. As a result of increasing reification, there no longer exists any "natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic 'qualities' into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process" (1971, p. 100).

Furthermore, for Lukács the reification is largely linked to the emergence of modern forms of technologies that increasingly colonize the authentic lived experience "right into the worker's 'soul'" (Lukács, 1971, p. 88). However, regarding technological development and its relation to reification, Benjamin ultimately also provides a far more complex argument, compared to Lukács. Whereas Lukács considers the development of modern technologies as a way to increase the subsumption of the working class to capital (as it seizes traditional and independent social relations based on, for example, family or rural community), for Benjamin the question is more complex, as he maintains that the new technologies also hold glimpses of new social relations that might ultimately also surpass the existing mode of production (Miller 2014, p. 13).

The problem for Benjamin is not the reified existence of the modern world and human experience subordinated to modern technologies as such. Instead, the problem identified by Benjamin was the tendency to utilize technological development politically only in accordance with the traditional worldview and its (outdated) social relations failing to grasp "new technological possibilities with a new social order" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 26; Gough, 2002, p. 66).

The ambiguity of technology is at the centre of Benjamin's unfinished major work, *The Arcades Project*, in which he develops the premises of critical theory precisely in relation to changes in urban space and the perceptions of the buildings and architecture from the nineteenth century onwards (Buck-Morss, 1989).[28] In the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin shows how the urban space of Paris has itself become a total commodity in the sense that Marx defined the concept (Lahiji and Andreotti, 2016). In this context, especially urban planning and architecture become a pivotal controlling technique of labour power and population.

For Benjamin, a key reference is the urban development of Paris by Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann. Between 1853 and 1870, Emperor Napoléon III commissioned a major public renewal to be implemented in Paris. The work was led by Haussmann. The replanning of Paris included the demolition of overcrowded, unsafe, and unhygienic medieval neighbourhoods and the development of broad streets, new parks, and squares, known today as the iconic Haussmann boulevards.

The political motives of Haussmann's work have been fiercely debated, especially in Marxist urban thought, from Engels' *Zur Wohnungsfrage* onwards (Merrifield, 2015, pp. 35–44). Critical perspectives suggest that Haussmann's urban renewal was not merely a political attempt to improve urban hygiene and the condition of living for the population of Paris. Instead, it was a way to make

[28] Consider, for example, Benjamin's interest towards surrealism as a way to surpass the one-sided teleological and mechanistic conceptualization of modernist progress. In his essay on surrealism, Benjamin wrote about the possibility to "encompass both Breton and Le Corbusier—that would mean drawing the spirit of contemporary France like a bow, with which knowledge shoots the moment in the heart" (Benjamin 1999, p. 459; see also Mical, 2005).

the urban space more controllable and surveyable for capitalistic profit. It is easy to connect Benjamin to this trajectory. According to Benjamin:

> Haussmann's activity is linked to Napoleonic imperialism. Louis Napoleon promotes investment capital, and Paris experiences a rash of speculation. Trading on the stock exchange displaces the forms of gambling handed down from feudal society. The phantasmagorias of space to which the flâneur devotes himself find a counterpart in the phantasmagorias of time to which the gambler is addicted. Gambling converts time into a narcotic. (…) The expropriations carried out under Haussmann call forth a wave of fraudulent speculation. (Benjamin, 1999, p. 12)

Here, as Nadir Lahiji has shown, Benjamin "took a Marxian step to delineate architecture as an instrument of the bourgeois power" (Lahiji, 2020, p. 48). However, Benjamin simultaneously does not examine the genealogy of Haussmannization only to find the origins for contemporary capitalist domination. Instead, he approaches the development of architecture and urban development from a perspective in which there also exists "the *germ* of an *egalitarian* theory of architecture" (Lahiji, 2020, p. 49). For Benjamin, technological development is thus not solely subordination to capitalism under modern society. Instead, technological development is necessarily also a reflection of a new mode of experience that has the potentiality to renew the existing social relations (Leslie, 2000, p. xii).

While rejecting technological determinism and "the subordination of the political to technology" (MacPhee, 2004, p. 89), Benjamin conceptualizes a more heuristic notion of technology (*Technik*) in which "technology reinvents the very condition of the political, while the political discovers or invents different possibilities in technology" (MacPhee, 2004, p. 89). Contrary to how Benjamin considers the deployment of new technologies as an integral part of capitalist rationalization and modernization in which "technology is realized as a destructive force, subjugating natural resources and, by this means, realizing pervasive social oppression" (Elliott, 2015, p. 148), Benjamin also suggests that such technological development becomes a "material means for achieving genuinely creative contexts for extending the possibilities of social existence" (Elliott, 2015, p. 148).[29]

These are "unforeseeable futures" inherent especially in Benjamin's conceptualization of architectural technologies and new building materials and how they affect the perception of city and urban space (Benjamin, 1999, p. 4;

[29] The critical history of technology, an idea proposed by Marx in passing in his chapter "Machinery and large-scale industries" in *Capital*, may help clarify Benjamin's political thought and the ambiguity of new technologies in it. For Marx, certain paradigmatic technologies that define a certain era (e.g. the water wheel in Rome or Gutenberg's type of printing) not only mark a rupture from earlier technologies but also from earlier social relations. By focusing on these technological ruptures, such as mass production and new materials, we see how "technology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of the production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conception that flow from those relations" (Marx, 2004, p. 493; see also Harvey, 2010, p. 189).

MacPhee, 2004). Benjamin calls these collective "wish images" that introduce a utopian dimension to politics:

> Corresponding to the form of the new means of production, which in the beginning is still ruled by the old (Marx), are images in the collective consciousness in which the old and the new interpenetrate. These images are wish images; in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production. At the same time, what emerges in these wish images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated—which includes, however, the recent past. These tendencies deflect the imagination (which is given impetus by the new) back upon the primal past. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history—that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society—as stored in the unconscious of the collective—engender, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions. (Benjamin, 1999, pp. 4–5)

By emphasizing this ambiguity of technology, Benjamin manages to locate an important form of political struggle embedded in urban space that remains relevant even today: if urban space and architecture are mediators for the production and extraction of economic value and the locuses of social relations, then they are also pivotal sites for understanding the political conflicts of the modern world.

In this study and especially in Article A1, the ambiguous conceptualization of technological development and its social, political, and cultural relevance is addressed in relation to Benjamin's reading of modern architecture. For Benjamin, the technological development of modern architecture cannot be conceived outside the broader capitalist rationalization, but there is a latent utopian tendency to be discovered within (Mertins, 1996). For example, Benjamin's fascination with new building materials and technologies, such as glass, steel, and reinforced concrete, are not plain signifiers of capitalist modernity and evidence that the built environment has become increasingly reified. Instead, for Benjamin, it is not coincidental that these material and new architectural forms emerge at the same time that the traditional 19th century bourgeois way of life is becoming increasingly contested (Miller, 2006).[30]

Benjamin's insights will be explored further, especially in relation to Marxist political theory, which has a historical tendency of reducing architecture to a mere reflection of the dominant ideologies of the ruling class in the superstructure, and hence implying that politics change is primarily change in the base structure ultimately external to architecture and urban planning. On the contrary, as the article suggests, Benjamin emphasizes a dialectical construction of politics through architecture.

[30] In a similar way, Benjamin famously argues that it is not coincidental that the development of photography and socialism emerge in tandem. Both are examples of change in sensorial perception towards the world that responds to the constitution of political masses as a privileged subject of the modern world (Molderings, 2014).

4.1.2 Cultural politics of the avant-garde

While formulating his argument, Benjamin also paid close attention to the European avant-garde promoting new ways of linking art and politics together.[31] Benjamin's interest in avant-garde was broad, and it included both aesthetic movements like surrealism and dada and more politically committed forms of the avant-garde, such as Russian constructivism. Common to these avant-garde movements was that they aimed to "broadcast a revolutionary commitment to art's powers of intervention in the daily lives of working people" (Leslie, 2000, p. 90). The emergence of avant-garde marked a new temporalization and spatialization of politics that disrupted the linear and chronological (and, to some extent, teleological) conceptualization of time and history (Lindroos, 1998, p. 23; see also Osborne, 1995).[32]

What Benjamin took from avant-garde art was a model for politics based on the sensorial organization of the world by making new vision and new ways of seeing (Boynik, 2018, p. 31). In this regard, avant-garde involved an attempt to rethink politics by providing a new type of sensorial experience and perceptive feeling of material nature (Bratu Hansen, 2012; MacPhee, 2004, p. 82). As Kia Lindroos suggests, what is relevant especially in constructivism (and especially constructivist architecture) for Benjamin is that it examines the material construction of the world through "visual and tactile perception." (Lindroos, 1998, p. 96; for a historical overview of constructivism, see Lodder, 1985; Gough, 2005).

Here Benjamin's understanding of politics and its relationship to art beyond representations of political parties and political ideologies becomes evident. Benjamin never systematically defines his conceptualization of politics, especially in any conventional sense of the concept. On the contrary, he often suggests that his work aims to "reject every contemporary political tendency" (Benjamin, cited in Eiland & Jennings, 2014, p. 127). However, this does not mean that Benjamin aimed to transcend politics. Instead, what I take this rejection to mean is precisely an expansion of what is understood as politics (Eiland & Jennings, 2014, p. 347).

Rather than thinking of art in the service of political parties or ideologies, Benjamin proceeded to ask whether it is possible to articulate new social relations by making novel artistic forms detached from tradition, existing power relations, and prevailing modes of production (see Gough, 2002, p. 66). As already mentioned, these social relations include broader sensorial structures of society and hence a broader experience of space and time. This could be understood as

[31] Here I am informed especially by John Roberts, who argues that avant-garde "is an experimental side of engagement with new modes of production" (Roberts, 2015, p. 258).
[32] One important early crossover between Benjamin and avant-garde can be situated already in the beginning of 1920s Weimar Berlin, where Benjamin spent time with the editorial board of *G – Material zur elementaren Gestaltung*, bringing influences from Russian constructivism to Weimar cultural politics (see Mertins and Jennings, 2010). *G* magazine involved important avant-garde architects and artists, such as El Lissitzky, Hans Richter, Werner Graeff, Mies van der Rohe, Theo van Doesburg, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Hannah Höch, and Raul Haussmann (see Robbers, 2016).

an aesthetic dimension of politics – not limited to political art or what Benjamin famously called the aestheticization of politics. Instead, as Susan Buck-Morss reminds:

> It *will* be helpful to recall the original etymological meaning of the word "Aesthetics" because it is precisely to this origin that, via Benjamin's revolution, we find ourselves returning. *Aisthitikos* is the ancient Greek word for that which is "perceptive by feeling." *Aisthesis* is the sensory experience of perception. The original field of aesthetics is not art but reality – corporeal, material nature. (Buck-Morss, 1992, p. 6)

Politics for Benjamin is thus primarily a way to reorganize the existing sensorial structures and modes of perception, aesthetics in the broad sense of the concept. As mentioned in the previous chapter, here politics increasingly becomes a problem associated with the artistic mediums and technologies that reconfigure political experience embedded in artistic form; one cannot advocate what Benjamin calls "progressive" politics and tendencies with an outdated artistic medium. It was especially Benjamin's encounter with German theatre theorist and writer Bertolt Brecht that made him systematically suggest that "the tendency of a literary work can be politically correct only if it is literarily correct" (Benjamin, 2005 [1933], p. 769). For Benjamin and Brecht, the progressive political tendency embedded in artwork cannot be considered isolated from the reconfiguration of the artistic form (Gough, 2002). The artistic medium (or, more philosophically, the artistic form) is not itself a neutral platform for external politics. Instead, artistic form is in a transversal relation to the political dimension that surrounds it (Raunig, 2007).

The problem of the outdated medium was most evident in debates about socialist realism, which had become the only official cultural policy of the Soviet Union after the influential Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934.[33] As is evident, the cultural and political conformism elaborated in the *Comintern*-era Soviet Union under the name of socialist realism was devastating for Benjamin as it marked a radical rejection of the earlier experimental political attitude and vibrant scene of avant-garde present in Russia after the revolution. The problem, however, not limited only to socialist realism as an official Marxist-Leninist cultural-political regime in the Soviet Union. Instead, realism was at the centre of aesthetico-political debates within Critical Theory as well (regarding this, see especially Adorno et. al, 1977; Lunn, 1985). Especially Lukács praised realism as an anti-capitalist form of art, as it sought to reveal the "submerged forces of reality by relying an on a principle of selection capable of producing perspective on the real" (Rockhill, 2014a, p. 60).

For Benjamin, the realistic approach – in general – ultimately fails to provide meaningful political change, as it fails to renew the broader aesthetic framework of society that mediates social relations. Instead, if there exists a politics related

[33] For the definition and historical origins of socialist realism, see especially "Soviet Literature – The Richest in Ideas, the Most Advanced Literature", a speech delivered at the Soviet Writers Congress in 1934 by Andrei Zhdanov.

to art, it is embedded in a configuration of new artistic forms.[34] Hence, the attempt to "change the world" demands also new artistic technologies for seeing the world differently. Not being limited only to direct conquering of power, political organizations, parties, and movements, or direct forms of propaganda, "political art" understood from this perspective is a struggle and battle over sensorial perceptions of society and the ways in which different social relations are produced, articulated, and visualized.

4.1.3 Mass-reproducible artistic technologies in the era of mass politics

By combining and rearticulating the insights from both Critical Theory and avant-garde, Benjamin outlines an important political function for new mass-reproducible artistic technologies. New artistic forms and technologies can result in the "cracking open of natural teleology" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 631; see also Charles, 2018; Ross, 2018). Benjamin's famous "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (hereafter "Artwork essay") is perhaps the most important, yet also complex, articulation of this theme. The "Artwork essay" provides further analysis of the intertwinement of art and politics discussed in the previous chapter. In the essay, it is further emphasized that the (re)production of artwork is not neutral activity, being isolated or distanced from the broader political struggle. Instead, the power relations of a given society are also produced through artistic tradition and auratic cultural canon.

What is often considered to be something unchangeable and natural in art is, according to Benjamin, a product of different ideologies of the ruling class. For art to be political is to challenge such neutral and ahistorical assumptions that also mystify the existing social relations and dominant forms of hegemonic power. In particular, Benjamin discusses new forms of (re)producing art that do not respond to traditional modes of perceiving artwork from the point of view of the authentic aura (individually and at a remove), but from the point of view of the collective reception of art (Jonsson, 2013; Lohtaja & Viitahuhta, 2018).

Here, alongside cinema, it is precisely architecture that provides a constant point of reference for Benjamin, as it makes it possible to perceive art "in a state of distraction and through the collective" (Benjamin, 2006 [1936], p. 268; Mertins, 1998). This distraction, "a mode of vision that is non-pictorial" (Schwartz, 2005, p. 65), is not solely a statement concerning the nature of the aesthetic perception related to architecture and cinema. Instead, it also reflects a political attempt of "keeping with the new conditions of life imposed by industrial civilization" (Heynen, 1999, p. 3). The mode of distraction thus responds to a new spatialization and temporalization of the modern world that is no longer defined as a static entity, approachable from a single perspective. Instead, it consists of flux, process movement, and a combination of various contradicting parts (Kwinter, 2001).

[34] Here I am following Tyrus Miller, who suggests that, contrary to realism, modernist "formally, thematically, and stylistically innovative artistic and literary works" shifted the focus from content towards the autonomy of artistic form itself (Miller, 2014, p. 2).

This mode of distraction is by nature collective, and in this regard Benjamin's discussion of mass art is integrally linked to a discussion of mass politics as well (Hansen, 2011; MacPhee, 2004). While Benjamin is, of course, not the first to identify the masses as a 20th century art-politics nexus, perhaps he is one of the firsts to associate it with the development of new artistic technologies not limited only to a mere representation of the masses through art. Instead, Benjamin's insights say something important about the modern constitution of politics in general.[35] As Benjamin suggests, the 20th century mass politics is not limited to mass party systems and general elections but more broadly a hegemonic struggle over "public" by modern mass media and forms of mass arts such as architecture.[36]

Historically, Benjamin sees especially two political responses that produce two similar but ultimately different ways of linking together art and politics in the era of the masses. These are communism and fascism. As Benjamin proposes, the technological development associated mainly with media, art, and culture was not only limited to "an increasingly harsh exploitation of the proletariat but, ultimately, the creation of conditions which would make it possible for capitalism to abolish itself" (Benjamin, 2006 [1936], p. 251). Here there emerges a connection between progressive modern artistic forms and (what Benjamin considers to be) progressive political ideology, communism. However, the essay is simultaneously an analysis of another emerging tendency from the opposite political spectrum: that of fascist modernism (see also Hewitt, 1995). While sharing similarities, there is also a crucial difference between these two, as Benjamin suggests in the famous ending of "Artwork essay". According to Benjamin:

> The increasing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two sides of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly proletarianized masses while leaving intact the property relations which they strive to abolish. It sees its salvation in granting expression to the masses – but on no account granting them rights. The masses have a *right* to changed property relations; fascism seeks to give them expression in keeping these relations unchanged. *The logical outcome of fascism is an aestheticizing of political life.* The violation of the masses, whom fascism, with its Führer cult, forces to their knees, has its counterpart in the violation of an apparatus which is pressed into serving the production of ritual values. (…) "*Fiat ars-pereat mundus,*" says fascism, expecting from war, as Marinetti admits, the artistic gratification of a sense perception altered by technology. This is evidently the consummation of *l'art pour l'art*. Humankind, which once, in Homer, was an object of contempla-

[35] Despite his famous criticism of Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno called Benjamin's "Artwork essay" the most powerful political theory since Lenin: "I cannot conclude, however, without telling you that your few sentences about the disintegration of the proletariat as 'masses' through revolution are among the profoundest and most powerful statements of political theory that I have encountered since I read *State and Revolution*" (Adorno et al., 1977, p. 126).
[36] For further elaboration of this within Critical Theory, see especially *Public Sphere and Experience* by Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt (2016). Margaret Kohn (2003) has also suggested in her study on the relationship between proletarian cultural spaces and working-class organization that it is the space itself that makes politics possible. The whole history of working-class politics is linked to the attempt to produce new spaces that are no longer dominated by the logic of the bourgeois public sphere.

> tion for the Olympian gods, has now become one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached the point where it can experience its own annihilation as a supreme aesthetic pleasure. Such is the aestheticizing of politics, as practiced by fascism. Communism replies by politicizing art. (Benjamin, 2006 [1936], pp. 269–270)

The whole essay is now famous precisely due to this cryptic and controversial ending (see Jay, 1992; Simons, 2016). It is often suggested that Benjamin's argument in the ending is mistaken, as the aestheticization of politics by fascism and the politicization of aesthetics by communism are ultimately "two sides of the same coin".[37] While there certainly exist convincing reasons and arguments to make such criticism, it nevertheless partially misunderstands what Benjamin is trying to do with this distinction, for such criticism seems to inherently assume that whatever artistic form can ultimately merge into whatever political ideology, and hence artistic form is in its essence politically neutral (Andreotti, 2014).

Therefore, it is important to analyse in a more detailed manner the intertwinement of political ideologies and artistic forms of mass-reproducible arts in the age of masses, that is, their relations to existing social relations. Jon Simons has argued that for Benjamin, "fascism and communism are both responses to crises of modernity that conjoin aesthetics in politics in inverted ways" (Simons, 2016, p. 47). They are opposite positions in a very particular historical conjuncture in which modern artistic techniques are taken to respond to the "the increasing proletarianization of modern man" (Benjamin, 2006 [1936], p. 269). Even if, for example, the propaganda techniques at the beginning of the 20th century might seem similar at first, regardless of whether they were utilized by communist or fascist movements, there is nevertheless a crucial difference as well.

According to Benjamin, fascism fails to renew the outdated social relations through new mass-reproducible forms of art, culture, and technology such as radio, cinema, and also modern sports. Even if, for example, film is in many ways a more "democratic" medium compared to traditional forms of art, its fascist variations (e.g. Leni Riefenstahl) ends up supplying outdated social relations by subordinating the masses to a strong political leader and nation-state. For example, fascist futurism offered an imperial and nationalistic artistic form as a response to integral crises of modernity in the aftermath of WWI, which was precisely a crisis due to nationalism and imperialism. Therefore, fascist modernism exploits "the technological and cultural potential of modernity for reactionary and destructive ends" (Osborne, 1995, p. 160).

Benjamin, however, sees another tendency of innervating the masses through mass-reproducible art in the communist avant-garde (Simons, 2016). Here, new mass-reproducible art forms are used to rehearse new social relations beyond capitalism, nationalism, and imperialism in order to develop new ways of seeing, whereas for the fascist counterparts the new technologies are primarily utilized for old ways of seeing. The progressive potentiality of mass-reproducible

[37] For such readings, see especially Richard Wolin's *Walter Benjamin, an Aesthetic of Redemption* (1982) and Lutz Koepnick's *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Power* (1999).

art thus remains to be fully realized only if it is connected to the new sensorial or experiential conceptualization of space, time, and social relations (Caygill, 1998).

4.1.4 The politics of architectural form

Benjamin's distinction between "fascist" and "communist" forms of mass-reproducible art can be taken to outline the difference of two politically dominant architectural forms emerging in the aftermath of WWI in the European cultural and political spectrum as well. These include 1) neo-classicism and rationalism with a connection to fascism, and 2) modernist architectural avant-garde with a connection to communist or socialist cultural politics. Even if there exist certain affiliates when it comes to their aesthetics, their inherent conceptualization of politics through architectural form is nevertheless different

Rationalist architecture responds to an era of disintegrated masses by subordinating them to strong political authority from above (Ghirardo, 1980). For example, Giuseppe Terragni's famous *Casa del Fascio* in Como, Northern Italy is an example of rationalized architectural form literally in the service of fascist ideology. Built between 1933–1936 to accommodate the local office of Mussolini's National Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*), the general overview of the building is still very modern, and later it has been considered one of the masterpieces of Italian modern architecture. The geometrical box has no ornaments, and the surface is structured by the rationalized division of windows and doors. However, the closer look suggests something else. The rationalized monumentality of the building makes a continuing reference to the heroic Italian past.[38] As such, it responds to the fascist treatment of masses subordinated to political form from above, as described by Benjamin: modern themes are intertwined here with more neo-classical motives. Before the building, the collective is not innervated but subordinated to feelings of guilt and debt to the fatherland and its strong leader.

While Benjamin never, to my knowledge, mentions *Casa del Fascio*, his general comments on neoclassical architecture as an anachronistic and reactionary style in modern world are interesting in this regard:

> Where neoclassicism is basically lacking is in the fact that it builds an architecture for the gods passing by which denies the fundamental relations of their coming-to-appearance. (A bad, reactionary architecture.) (Benjamin, 1999, p. 844)

For Benjamin, neoclassicism is a prime example of architectural style that seems to take material and technological development into consideration but fails to renew outdated social relations and hence results in a reactionary position (Benjamin, 1999, p. 844). Striving towards monumentality results in anachronistic forms that show how the latent political tendencies of modern mass-reproducible

[38] Slavoj Žižek (2016) has suggested in a similar way that Italian fascist architecture in the beginning of the 20th century consisted of an attempt to combine two paradoxical elements that were integral for fascist politics: on the one hand, mysticism, tradition, and monumentality, and on the other, progress, technology, and the shock of the new.

forms of art have not been fully realized. Instead, they are extensions of traditional social relations and hence the "worst kind of formalism".[39]

However, simultaneous development in communist constructivist architecture, for example, proposes a different innervation of the "masses" through architectural forms; these are the primary focus of Article A1. In addition to examples discussed in the article, communist workers' clubs designed by constructivist architects provide an interesting example of another type of building directly associated with political ideology in the era of mass-reproducible architecture. These workers' clubs were not only born out of a necessity to produce new spaces for the masses to gather and spread communist propaganda among themselves; they functioned as a way to compose these masses in the first place. This is evident especially in Alexander Rodchenko's interior design of "Lenin's Worker's club" (1925).[40] The workers' club, a place to relax and study, with its highly modern furniture, austere graphic typography, and other mass-reproducible aesthetics "was a model of a proletarian lifestyle which opposed the bourgeois ones" (Margolin, 1997, p. 95).

As the seminal avant-garde artist and architect El Lissitzky outlines in his *Architecture for World Revolution*, these workers' clubs by constructivist architects functioned primarily as new social forces (El Lissitzky 1984, p. 43). The clubs did not respond to the existing political needs to provide just any spaces for the proletariat organization. Instead, the design of the interior itself was an integral part of the revolutionary transformation (Kiaer, 2005). The clubs were not only places for the proletarian masses to gather under the communist ideology from above. Instead, they were places that actively reconfigured the latent social relations no longer based on individuality but on collective existence.[41]

In a similar way, in his classical historical study of constructivism as an integral part of the Russian Communist Revolution, Anatole Kopp, one of the most important theorists of constructivism, stated that such working-class spaces

> …embodied a conception of culture that was no longer that of an elite but of the mass, no longer acquired in the silence of the study or in halls of learning, but in a group bound by common interests and an awareness of their need. It corresponded to a conception in which the home tended to become merely a place for the individual to rest, while life in all its social and cultural aspects developed in collective centres and col-

[39] Here I am referring especially to Bernard Huet's notion that fascism is regressive formalism in Benjamin's thought: "Walter Benjamin remarked that fascism is the worst formalism, because it effects an aestheticization of social relations in order to mask conflicts. To the extent that such an attempt is visible in the work of certain architects, whose projects lend figure to the utopia of a social 'order' without conflict, one can speak of 'formalism.' Formalism is bureaucratic. Any system that tends to reduce reality to a certain number of norms, standards, and styles leads to formalism. By extension, it can be said that architects who conceive architecture in simple adequacy to functional norms, without any concern for social relations or for the monumental values that are implicit in social demands, are liable to the accusation of 'formalism'" (Huet, 2000, p. 259).

[40] Lenin's workers' club was never actually implemented. Instead, the concept was showcased in the USSR Pavilion designed by Konstantin Melnikov for The International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts held in Paris in 1925.

[41] As Lissitzky suggests, "The aim of the club is to liberate man and not to oppress him as was formerly done by the Church and the State" (Lissitzky, 1984, p. 44).

> lective forms, at a time when a craving for culture was beginning to seize the broad masses of the population. (Kopp, 1970, p. 116)

For Benjamin, such spatial reconfiguration equals a broader social transition. The idea is present especially in his short piece "Moscow", which reflects his stay in the city during 1926–1927. As Benjamin notes, a drastic reconsideration of living and private life has taken place in Moscow and new "dwelling place is the office, the club, the street" (Benjamin, 1999 [1931], p. 30).

Furthermore, this also comes close to Benjamin's comments on constructivist cinema, in that he approaches not merely the plot or content but from a perspective of how it creates a new artistic – and, importantly also, spatial – form for the new collective existence. Commenting, for example, on the collective reception by the audience of *Battleship Potemkin* by Sergei Eisenstein, Benjamin suggests that there is a pivotal connection between the cinematic and architectonic ways of innervating collective political motion by creating a new space that goes beyond the monumental treatment of the masses:

> The proletariat, however, is a collective, just as these spaces are collective spaces. And only here, in the human collective, can the film complete the prismatic work that it began by acting on that milieu. The epoch-making impact of *Potemkin* can be explained by the fact that it made this clear for the first time. Here, for the first time, a mass movement acquires the wholly architectonic and by no means monumental quality that justifies its inclusion in the film. (Benjamin, 1999 [1927], p. 18)

According to Benjamin, the masses take direct dynamic architectural and spatial form through the cinema (Lindroos, 1998, p. 155). It is not only the ideological content of the film that matters but instead theatre's capability to produce a collective political space that is at the same time physical (screening in workers' clubs) and sensorial (as a construction of the new collective experience).

The same is true regarding the emergence of modern architecture in Weimar Germany more broadly influenced by Russian constructivism. As Sabine Haike has shown, the new architectural forms in Weimar "not only shed light on the crisis of bourgeois subjectivity and the perceived threat of deindividualization, but also grant access to the new forms of collectivity, community, and public life that are essential, though often overlooked or disregarded, part of the making of the modern masses and the power" (Haike, 2008, pp. 2–3).

New artistic, cinematic, and architectural forms also shape the human experience and the spatial configuration of politics in a broader sense. Following this, Benjamin not only discusses housing and architecture from the actual socio-political standpoint (architecture representing external politics) but more broadly in terms of architectural space as a social relation itself.[42]

[42] Karel Teige, an important Czech modernist avant-garde artist and architectural theorist, provides a similar argument in his seminal *The Minimum Dwelling*. For Teige, "the key to the solution of [the housing] problem lies in the question of private property in particular, and of the production and social situation in general. Within the framework of the prevailing system, all questions of social policy, whether they concern workers' rights or housing de-

Here, regarding the scope of the study, the most important aspect can now be suggested: for Benjamin, architecture is a medium for politics on a submerged, sensorial, and experiential level that cannot be reduced to existing social relations or external political representations. From this perspective, the relationship between architecture is negotiated constantly through historical conjunctures of the social and political dimensions of the built environment. Thus, architecture, as well as other mass-reproducible arts, are not only a continuation of or in the service of existing politics. Article A1 examines this further in relation to Marxist ideologies embedded in modern architectural avant-garde in Benjamin's thought.

4.2 Henri Lefebvre

Where is politics located? In recent decades, we have been witnessing a particular form of political uprising that directly addresses and occupies access to the urban and public space. Multiple urban movements, riots, and protests have utilized the catchword "right to the city" as an attempt to take back urban space, cities, and housing from their financialized and commodified forms. From new urban social movements to recent critical geographical inquiries, it is suggested that we should rethink and find political alternatives to the prevailing commodification of housing. (Harvey, 2012.)

The idea is not new, however. In fact, the right to the city is associated with French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991), who produced his main works half a century ago.[43] Perhaps no other philosopher, political theorist, or sociologist is so closely connected to space, the built environment, and architecture than Lefebvre (for a biographical account of Lefebvre, see Hess, 1988). [44] In his autobiography *Le temps des méprises* (1975), Lefebvre suggests that to fully understand the modern world, experiences of modernity, and the transformation of capitalism in the 20th century, it is precisely the analysis of space that is required (Lefebvre, 1975, p. 18).

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mands, are only by-products of the class struggle; any occasional successes result only in a partial alleviation of the evils of greed and usury. Because they never touch the root cause of the problem or change anything in the basic constitution of the system, they remain a palliative and a superficial treatment of symptoms, never leading to a real cure. Since the housing question, as an inseparable part of the housing crisis, is inextricably linked to the current economic system, it cannot be eliminated unless this system is eliminated and a new one established" (Teige, 2002, 60).

[43] For further Lefebvre scholarship, see especially Mark Gottdiener, *The Social Production of Urban Space* (1985); Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (1989); Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love, and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics* (1999); Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (2004); Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (2006); Kanishka Goonewardena et al., *Space, Difference, Everyday life* (2008); Lukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space* (2011); Chris Butler, *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, Everyday Life and the Right to the City* (2012); Michael Leary-Owhin & John McCarthy, *The Routledge Handbook of Henri Lefebvre, The City and Urban Society* (2019).

[44] Fredric Jameson famously suggests that "Lefebvre's conception of 'space' as the fundamental category of politics and of the dialectic itself – the one great prophetic vision of these last years of discouragement and renunciation – has yet to be grasped in all its pathbreaking implications" (Jameson, 2000, p. 443).

According to Lefebvre, one cannot understand modern and contemporary political conflicts without the central role of space, planning, and architecture as a central medium for politics; for Lefebvre, political revolutions have always been about the struggle over space as well. Political change is impossible if the spaces and everyday life practices that mediate politics are not changed. In this research, such a spatial configuration of politics is examined in relation to Lefebvre's conceptualization of architecture in particular.

Regarding this, there is one important reservation to be made, however, as for Lefebvre the political dimension of architecture is far from clear. More properly, it seems that there exist two slightly different conceptualizations inherent in Lefebvre's thought. As a Marxist philosopher and theorist, Lefebvre's discussion of architecture has similarities to the (in)famous Marxist reading of architecture by Manfredo Tafuri, who approaches architecture primarily from the point of view of its ideological function to reproduce the conditions of capitalist production, dominant social relations, and forms of power.

What has been outlined in previous scholarship is that Lefebvre's analysis of space is historically linked to a broader reconsideration of architecture's role in society taking place especially in France in the 1960s (Violeau, 2005). What is evident is that there is a highly ideological function of architecture and urban planning in Lefebvre's theory, like that of Tafuri. Lefebvre similarly suggests that the reproduction and control of space comprise one of the most important areas for the reproduction of the relations of production (Lefebvre, 1976).

However, if one follows only such a trajectory, there is a risk of mistaking another conceptualization of architecture in Lefebvre's thought that is directly linked to his conceptualization of politics as well. Similarly to Benjamin, Lefebvre's understanding of politics is not reducible to mere economic analysis of production or external political ideologies. Consequently, when Lefebvre discusses the practices of everyday life, urban space, and architecture, he does not think of it as plainly subordinated to the base structure, the economic basis of society. Instead, he considers them to be pivotal places for configuring politics in a more profound sense (Shmuely, 2008).

Following this latter conceptualization, this study attempts to show that for Lefebvre, architectural politics is never reducible directly to broader relations of production. Instead, politics for Lefebvre, being mediated by architecture, is also about the spatial reconfiguration of different possibilities latent in the prevailing mode of production and prevailing spaces (Elden, 2004).

4.2.1 Space, politics, and everyday life

> First and foremost Marx wanted to change everyday life. To change the world is above all to change the way everyday, real life is lived. In so far as the times he lived in allowed him to contemplate such hypotheses, Marx considered that the upheaval in external nature and the conquest of space as a result of technical development on a colossal scale would only happen after human life had been metamorphosed. (Lefebvre, 2014a, pp. 329–330)

Lefebvre's political thought is a combination of different eclectic theoretical sources (Lefebvre, 2020). He was a Marxist, but his thought was heavily influenced also by Hegel, Nietzsche, Heideggerian phenomenology, and Freudian psychoanalysis (for a broader analysis of Lefebvre's philosophical influences from the 1930s onwards, see especially Poster, 1975; Burkhard, 2000; Baugh, 2003; Elden, 2004). From 1928 to 1958, Lefebvre was also a member of the French Communist Party (PCF). By and large, Lefebvre aimed to develop his philosophical thought in relation to more modern questions associated with everyday life and space from a Marxist perspective.

The primary of everyday life in its broad sense is crucial for understanding Lefebvre's conceptualization of politics.[45] The emphasis on everyday life and space is to some extent evident already in Lefebvre's writings in the 1930s, which were influenced by Surrealism, so-called French Hegelianism, Marx's recently discovered "Paris Manuscripts", and the emergence of phenomenology and existentialism in continental philosophical thought.[46] These early works attempted to address especially the problem of alienation that had become one of the defining themes of European philosophical thought in the interwar period, as was already noted in relation to Benjamin. Lefebvre maintains that alienation needs to be understood in its broadest sense: "the alienation of the worker by fragmented labour is only one aspect of a larger – total alienation – which as such is inherent in capitalist society" (Lefebvre 2014a, p. 59).

According to Lefebvre, these themes related to alienation are hard to grasp from a perspective of philosophy that still scorns the dimension of everyday life or reduces it to ahistorical, immaterial, and apolitical ideas (Elden, 2004, pp. 19–22). What is required, he suggests, is a new theoretical and methodological approach to everyday life and complex societal conjunctures unfolding in the experience of living and dwelling space.

Lefebvre calls this "Marxist critique of everyday life" what advances the critical project of philosophy (unravelling the conditions of knowledge) towards the material analysis of society and social relations unfolding through the category of everyday life:

> "Pure" ideas have real meaning, as Marx and Engels so profoundly understood. As historians, they refused to be idle onlookers of history. As philosophers, they stopped being mere flies on the wall so far as politics was concerned. They were the first to perceive how thought is linked to action. They were able to get to the very roots of ideas, to the fundamental questions. With Marx and Engels philosophical thought at its most coherent and most methodical comes down to the level of life and penetrates it, reveals it. By refusing to leave the real world for the exile of a world beyond – by becoming the consciousness and the critique of mankind, of men and human condi-

[45] Lefebvre suggests that the "oldest meaning" of the concept of 'political' is precisely "theoretical and practical knowledge of the social life in the community" (Lefebvre, 1969, p. 155).
[46] Here a good example is Lefebvre's early collaborative works with Norbert Guterman, such as *La conscience mystifiée* published in 1936, which repeated largely the same analysis of alienation that was outlined in the already mentioned and much more famous work, György Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*, on the intensifying logic of reification under capitalist modernity (Elden, 2004, p. 69).

> tions – Critical Reason, the Critical Reason of Descartes and Kant, becomes concrete, active and constructive. (Lefebvre, 2014a, p. 162)

Lefebvre was, of course, not the first to analyse the political dimension of everyday life. Alongside other philosophical and theoretical contributions from Benjamin and the Frankfurt School but also Martin Heidegger and Sigmund Freud, to name just a few, everyday life was also a fundamental problem for political ideologists such as V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and Boris Arvatov within the Marxist tradition (see Highmore, 2002; see also Gardiner, 2000). According to John Roberts, Lenin, Trotsky, and other Soviet ideologists "unleash a new kind of politics in which all aspects of social and cultural life are subject to evaluation and transformation. Politics is now the mediating form between the collective self-activity of the proletariat and the new cultural forms of everyday life" (Roberts 2006, p. 21). [47] Such a conceptualization of politics ranged from the theories of Lenin and Trotsky to the foundation of Protletkult. Additionally, Alexandra Kollontai's political thought on issues related to feminism and women's position promoted a new understanding of everyday life and relations between men and women as a pivotal site for politics.

In his long preface written in 1958 for the second edition of *The Critique of Everyday Life,* Lefebvre surprisingly finds, given the fact that he constantly criticized Marxism-Leninism, that Lenin's political thought is useful in this regard. [48] As Lefebvre reminds, Lenin expanded Marxist thought from a direct question of gaining power in current society to the question of construction of a new type of everyday life (*byt*) (Lefebvre, 2014a, p. 25; see also Willimott, 2017). However, as Lefebvre notes, such a Marxist-Leninist approach was nevertheless too fixated on the centrality of the party, and therefore Lefebvre's own project "was built entirely around a concept which Lenin had left aside or neglected, the concept of alienation" (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 25).

Ultimately what Lefebvre proposes with his Marxist critique is different. Whereas Trotsky and Lenin both believed that the most important task was to provide a new proletarian version of everyday life and culture that would automatically replace bourgeoisie forms, Lefebvre (like Benjamin) is more interested in the "fruitful contradictions" found in the experience of everyday life itself (Lefebvre 2014a, 54). Rather than following the trajectory of Lenin and Trotsky, for Lefebvre everyday life is a process of a broader conjuncture of alienating forces and concrete experiences and "can only be defined concretely

[47] According to critical readings, the attempt to renew everyday life also notoriously culminates in Stalin and his totalitarian biopolitical reform of everyday life (see Prozorov, 2016).
[48] See, for example, Lenin's "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats" (1894), from which Lefebvre reproduces Lenin's famous quotation concerning everyday life and culture as the flesh that clothes the skeleton of the economy: "The whole point, however, is that Marx … did not confine himself to 'economic theory' in the ordinary sense of the term, that, while explaining the structure and the development of the given formation of society exclusively through production relations …[he] clothed the skeleton in flesh and blood. The reason *Capital* has enjoyed such tremendous success is that this book by a 'German economist' showed the whole capitalist social formation to the reader as a living thing – with its everyday aspects" (Lenin, 1894, cited in Lefebvre, 2014a, p. 25).

on the level of everyday life, as a system of changes in what can be called lived experience" (Lefebvre 2014a, p. 71).

Here Lefebvre makes a distinction between two paths for the renewal of the politics associated with everyday life and its spaces: the one associated directly with political ideology (such as Marxism-Leninism) and the other concerning the broader transformation of life and political space itself. The emphasis of lived experience over the party model is implied in Lefebvre's discussion of cultural production after WWI including artists such as James Joyce, Charles Chaplin, and Bertolt Brecht (Lefebvre, 2014a, p. 33). Another important influence, especially for later parts of Lefebvre's critique of the everyday life project, was Lefebvre's influence on the political and neo-avant-garde group *Internationale Situationniste*, which combined Marxist theoretical thought with (neo-)avant-gardist artistic practices.

Related to this, Andy Merrifield associates Lefebvre with the tradition of Marxist political thought freed from the "objectivity of the party" (Merrifield 2006, p. 50). According to Merrifield, there is a link between Lefebvre and earlier heterodox Marxist thinkers such as Rosa Luxemburg, who rejected the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxies and the conformism of social-democratic movements and their reformist policies. For Luxemburg, political transformation is not merely an evolutionary stage led by the Party but instead "the product of a series of great creative acts" (Luxemburg, cited in Merrifield, 2006, p. 50).

Political change for Lefebvre is hence not limited only to the renewal of political institutions and the juridico-political system but more broadly the conceptualization of new collective experience through everyday life (Lefebvre, 2014a, p. 327). More particularly, Lefebvre suggests that politics is about "moments" in which alternative political modalities, agencies, and ways of life emerge (Lefebvre, 2014a, pp. 634–652).[49] Such moments are for Lefebvre spatial and temporal ruptures that challenge the existing status quo and expand the political imaginary of what is considered possible:

> The moment cannot be defined by the everyday or within it, but nor can it be defined by what is exceptional and external to the everyday. It gives the everyday a certain shape, but taken per se and extrapolated from that context, this shape is empty. The moment imposes an order on the chaos of ambiguity but taken per se this order is ineffectual and pointless. The moment does not appear simply anywhere, at just any time. It is a festival [such as Paris commune], it is a marvel, but it is not a miracle. It has its motives, and without those motives it will not intervene in the everyday. (Lefebvre, 2014a, p. 650)

The moment of politics is not in the transition of power but in attempts to reconfigure the ways in which work, commute, leisure time, social care (childcare, cooking, cleaning), dwelling, and the use of space is organized.[50] In this sense,

[49] According to Lefebvre, a seminal example of such moments was the student protests in May 1968. Regarding this, see also Michael Seidman's *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (2004).

[50] Alongside 1968, a frequent historical point of reference for Lefebvre was the Paris Commune (Lefebvre, 2018). The Paris Commune was a temporary occupation of Paris in spring

political change is never articulated in relation to a direct seizure of power by a political party but in relation to a broader sensorial reorganization of social relations (Lefebvre 2014a, p. 34).

4.2.2 There is a politics of space because space is political

> I repeat that there is a politics of space because space is political. (Lefebvre, 2009, p. 174)

The timespan 1967–1974 marks a productive period in Lefebvre's career, wherein Lefebvre reorientated his analysis of everyday life increasingly towards space, architecture, and the urban dimension of politics.[51] For Lefebvre, space and architecture are not only neutral containers for political action. Space does not become political via external political implementation (in a sense that one could politicize neutral space for political purposes). Instead, politics itself is produced through space. As Stuart Elden suggests, for Lefebvre space is a "medium of struggle" itself (Elden, 2004, p. 183).

In *Right to the City* (1996), Lefebvre's first book directly examining the increasingly politicized field of architecture and urban planning, it is asserted that politics is all about access to urban space and its different possibilities. Here, Lefebvre's analysis resonates with key historical moments: "new social movements" emerging from the 1960s onwards no longer take the factory as the privileged site of struggle. Instead, most relevant struggles are focused on housing, planning, and the access to urban life.

In the following book *Urban Revolution* (2003), the idea is developed further with a reference to an "urban" mode of production superseding the "industrial" mode of production. No longer at stake are fixed spaces such as the factory but instead urban relations as the primacy of capitalism.[52] Moreover, for Lefebvre "urban" is not an empirical category in a similar way as it is, for example, in the seminal Chicago urban sociology school, which thinks of urbanity as a density of population formulating "a way of life" (Wirth, 1938). Instead, "urban" refers to a combination of various social relations in spatial form (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 4; see

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1871. As an outcome of the turbulent era of the Franco-Prussian War between the Second French Empire and the beginning of the Third Republic, a group of radical "Communards", consisting mainly of radicalized factory workers, seized power in Paris and established an autonomous commune with its political institutions. The importance of the Paris Commune for Lefebvre lay in its attempt to think of political change as closely associated with the reorganization of everyday life and urban space. Rather than seizing or transforming the political power from Napoleon III to the communards, a more important political dimension of the Paris Commune can be traced to its attempt to outline a new type of aesthetic political experience (see also Ross, 2015; Stanek, 2017).

[51] The most important publications from this period include *Le Droit à la ville* (1968), *Du rural a l'urbain* (1970), *La révolution urbaine* (1970), *Le pensée marxiste et ville* (1972), *Espace et politique* (1972), and *La Production de l'espace* (1974).

[52] The argument bears similarities to Antonio Negri's political thought. Negri uses the concept of metropolis to emphasize the same transition from factory to urban fabric as the privileged site for contemporary political and economic conflicts. According to Negri, "The contemporary metropolis can be defined as a space of antagonism between 'forms of life' produced at one end by financial capitalism (the capitalism of rent) and at the other by the cognitive proletariat" (Negri, 2018, p. viii).

also Cunningham, 2005). The contradictory nature of social reality appears throughout various conflicts of space and everyday life mediated by this constantly changing urban form:

> The urban is, therefore, pure form: a place of encounter, assembly, simultaneity. This form has no specific content, but is a center of attraction and life. It is an abstraction, but unlike a metaphysical entity, the urban is a concrete abstraction, associated with practice. (Lefebvre, 2003, pp. 118–119)

The discussion of urban form anticipates Lefebvre's broader philosophical analysis of space as a combination of social relations in his major work *The Production of Space*. Here, Lefebvre emphasizes that space is not only "the passive locus of social relations" (1991, p. 11) but instead social relations are produced through the production of the space itself.[53] With this emphasis, Lefebvre aims to challenge a geometrical understanding of space as something that is itself empty and something that needs to be filled with external action. For Lefebvre, this can be traced philosophically to Descartes and Newton and their idea of space as empty container and *res extensa*. Additionally, Lefebvre suggests that similar emphasis is present in Immanuel Kant and later Kantian philosophy, such as Husserl, Foucault, Kristeva, and Derrida, in which, at least according to Lefebvre, the notion of space is a necessary precondition and category for the human condition, experience, and knowledge but ultimately external to this experience and hence undialectical itself (see Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 1–6, 24).

According to Lefebvre, such a static conceptualization of space fails to acknowledge that space is itself socially produced and filled with various historically varying ideologies: "Every society — and hence every mode of production with its subvariants (…) produces a space, its own space" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 31). Such approach enables us to see that the way in which we consider space, whether a mental conceptualization or in a concrete sense, is marked by various contradictions. There is not one single privileged perspective towards space. Instead, social space is a product of a series of longstanding, historical, and unresolved conflicts that determine the way in which space is understood. Space is simultaneously the place in which existing power relations are manifested, being consolidated but also contested.

To grasp this, Lefebvre introduces his famous three-dimensional dialectics of space in which everyday spatial practices (perceived space), ideological and institutional (conceived space), and imagined (lived space) collide (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 33, 38–39). For Lefebvre, perceived space and its *spatial practices* are the space that is most familiar to us and hence the dimension of space that we rarely even question. Conceived space refers to *representations of space* that transcend direct perceptions of the space. The perception of space is never direct, neutral, or natural. Instead, it is transmitted through various conceived representations

[53] As Stathis Kouvelakis has shown, for Lefebvre "the production of space is not a passive reflection, external to social relations: it refers to a dimension, decisive because constitutive, of the processes of their overall reproduction, which is also, at the same time, the spatial reproduction of their contradictions" (Kouvelakis, 2008, p. 723).

of space such as power relations, ideologies, and political interests integral to the production of the space. From cartography and colonialization to zoning, urban planning to digital modelling spaces and GIS, we are guided to look at spaces in a particular way that highlights the hierarchies and property relations in it. Lived space consists of *representational spaces* that expand our perceptions of space by constantly challenging the hierarchies of conceptualized space and its representations of power. These are practices that contest the normality of space, emphasizing its contradictory nature. A frequent reference for Lefebvre here is different forms of art, which shape our understanding and imaginaries of the space.

How can such theoretical notions of space be applied to architecture? Even if it is sometimes taken that Lefebvre's conceptualization of space is primarily theoretical without any concrete architectural in mind, it is, as especially Lukasz Stanek (2011) has shown in his important work, possible to identify multiple contemporaneous architectural examples that influenced Lefebvre and in turn are influenced by Lefebvre.[54] I will clarify this further in the following chapters.

4.2.3 From architecture to planning

> It is significant that almost all the economic objectives formulated by Keynes in his *General Theory* can be found, in purely ideological form, at the basis of the poetics of modern architecture. (Tafuri 2000, p. 28)

How should we understand the role of architecture in Lefebvre's theory of the production of space? To begin with the most obvious observation, architecture for Lefebvre is an integrally political practice related to how space and everyday life, social relations, and practices are mediated, organized, and reshaped (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 10). One cannot think of architecture outside of the broader economic and political context and the prevailing mode of production and its inherent power relations. The prevailing relations of production, existing social relations, and power relations are embedded in the built environment (Coleman, 2014, p. 62). As Lefebvre suggests, "architecture cannot be conceived other than as a social practice among others (for example, medicine) in the practical ensemble which sustains and which society at present supports (the mode of production)" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 189).

Architectural forms signify the external political forces and mode of production (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 144; Lefebvre, 2003, p. 10).

Here, the relationship between architecture and politics becomes especially a problem of thinking of the political agency of architecture in relation to its economic dependency. One cannot undertake an architectural reorganization of society outside the existing economic relations. As Lefebvre states in his writings on the relationship between state and space, architecture and urban planning

[54] Related to this, Lefebvre comments, for example, on Robert Venturi, who as "an architect and a theorist of architecture, wants to make space dialectical. He sees space not as an empty and neutral milieu occupied by dead objects but rather as a field of force full of tensions and distortions" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 145).

become the most dominant ideology for reproducing the conditions of production, especially in the latter part of the 20th century (see especially Lefebvre, 2009).

In this regard, Lefebvre's reading outlines similar tendencies that are often associated with Manfredo Tafuri's Marxist reading of architecture. Here architecture loses its "form without Utopia" and "sublime uselessness" and instead becomes a vehicle for capitalist development, offering a "plan" for capital (Tafuri, 1976, p. ix). As Tafuri famously suggested, especially from the 20th century onwards, the architectural plan (*piano*) has been a pivotal site for restructuring the spatial conditions of society in accordance with the broader conditions of production:

> The Plan embraced by the leading architectural movements (the term "avant-garde" is no longer applicable), starting with Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* (1925) and the stabilization of the Bauhaus (around 1921), contained the following contradiction: starting from the building sector, architectural culture discovered that only by linking that sector to the reorganization of the city could pre-established goals be satisfactorily met. But this was equivalent to saying that, just as the demands presented by the avant-gardes had pointed to the visual communications sector most directly entrenched in the economic process (i.e., architecture and industrial design), so the planning formulated by architectural and urban theorists likewise pointed toward something other than itself: to wit, toward a restructuring of production and consumption in general—toward a plan for capital. (Tafuri, 2000, p. 20)

Tafuri's critical reading of the architectural plan, especially the modernist one, emphasizes the subordination of architecture to the broader political and economic framework of society (Orr, 2019). According to Tafuri, there cannot be any political agency of architecture isolated from the broader economic relations. Historically, Tafuri points out the pivotal connection between modernist architecture and the Keynesian-Fordist economic regime in particular.

Gail Day (2005) associates Tafuri's criticism of architectural planning with the broader Italian Marxist strain of Operaismo (Workerism), which aimed to "rethink Marx's theory of political economy in the context of their experience of Italy's postwar 'economic miracle'" that resulted in "the extraordinary pace of modernization and urbanization (…) and the ongoing restructuring of labour relations" (Day, 2005, p. 33). During this era, the capitalist economy did not provide a similar type of antagonism between capital and labour as was the case in the 19th century. Instead, there emerged a new "class compromise" between capital, the state, and the working class. State-led social and economic policies, financed by taxation, granted improvements for the working class in exchange for increased productivity.

As Antonio Negri, one of the leading theorists of Operaismo, suggests in his "Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of State post-1929" (1994), read closely by Tafuri as well, Fordism and Keynesianism were attempts to produce consensus-based political decisions between the state, capital, and labour force to prevent the Wall Street crash of 1929 in particular (seen as the symptom of classical irregulated capitalism) from happening again. By regulating and steering the

economy in the right direction via planning, the future with its material progress and the decline of scarcity seemed to be better for everyone (Negri, 1994, pp. 28–29).

A plan is thus a concept that can be applied not only to architecture or urban planning, spatial planning, and regional planning but to the organization of society (Amhoff, 2012). It is utopia in the form of Keynesianism. Lefebvre would certainly agree that planning in its broadest sense is pivotal for a reformist renewal of the modern state. For both Lefebvre and Tafuri, planning is a metaphor that can be taken more broadly to comprehend state interventionist "Keynesian" ideology during the *Trente glorieuses* in France and *il boom economico* in Italy. Moreover, one can identify a similar trajectory in the modernization of Finland as well (Hankonen, 1994; Korvenmaa, 2004). Compared to the classical model of 19th century laissez-faire capitalism, for Lefebvre this new state mode of production functioned precisely through planning – of which urban planning provides the best example (Lefebvre, 2009, p. 171).

However, even if the connotations of planning here expand beyond architecture, there is nevertheless a particular political strategy reserved for it. For Lefebvre, in a similar way as for Tafuri, it was precisely the emergence of modern architecture (constructivism, the Bauhaus, Le Corbusier) that, despite its revolutionary rhetoric, took the active role in implementing this Keynesian form of capitalism by outlining a new conceptualization of space that would be compatible with the broader ideology of planning (Lefebvre, 2009, p. 233; see also McLeod, 1983).[55] Like Tafuri, Lefebvre aims to show especially the pivotal connection between modernist architectural planning and its continuity in the new form of what he calls the "state mode of production" (*le mode de production étatique*) emerging in the latter part of the 20th century, in which the state takes an active role in managing economic growth by controlling and producing land use, infrastructure, and the built environment (Lefebvre, 2009; Brenner, 2008).

The problem is empirically present in Lefebvre's writings that deal with French grand-scale urban reconstruction plans (so-called *Grands ensembles*) often located in the outskirts of older cities or entirely new regions. In his short piece "Notes on the new town" (1995), Lefebvre addresses the phenomena by taking as example the city of Lacq-Mourenx, which was built to accommodate the workers needed in the extraction industries of gas, oil, and sulphur nearby. The architecture of prefabricated concrete elements was cost-effective but also equipped with modern living conveniences, and the overall regional plan for the

[55] A similar statement was articulated by Lefebvre's interlocutors in the architectural group *Utopie*, which aimed to consider architecture and urbanism as integral products of capitalist society (Buckley & Violeau, 2011). *Utopie,* founded in 1966 at Lefebvre's country house, was comprised of a group of philosopher-sociologists, such as Lefebvre and his then-assistant Jean Baudrillard, urban planners (most notably Hubert Tonka), and a new generation of young architects (Jean Aubert, Antoine Stinco, Jean-Paul Jungman, Catharine Cot, and Isabelle Auricoste). The purpose of the group and the eponymous journal was to provide reflections between philosophy, social theory, and architecture against the prevailing urbanism that had become one of the most blamed reasons for social alienation in the protests of 1968 in Paris (Buckley & Violeau, 2011). Alongside the journal, various exhibitions, workshops, and other events were held in the name of *Utopie* to contest the boundaries of the profession's self-image (Aubert, Dessauce, Jungmann, & Stinco, 1999).

area was, as even Lefebvre had to acknowledge, an impressive social-democratic improvement (Stanek, 2011, p. 109). From this perspective, Lacq-Mourenx was not a total exploitation of workers but represented somewhat of a compromise in the form of what Stathis Kouvelakis has called "spatial Keynesianism" (Kouvelakis, 2008, p. 721).

Here we return to the problem of reformism as a form of architectural politics that can be historically traced to the interwar period but also covers later and more general articulations of the relationship between architecture, economy, and politics.[56] In one way indeed, architecture is situated at the centre of politics; it is widely accepted that societal change requires architectural planning. However, such planning is so dependent on external power relations and the economy that certain architectural autonomy – as a necessary precondition for politics – becomes impossible. Instead, architecture's utopian potentiality to "change society through design" is reduced to a reformist reorganization of the existing conditions of production.

This is, of course, what Tafuri called the ideological dimension of architectural utopianism. For Tafuri, it is impossible to think of political alternatives through architecture, as it is so fundamentally connected to the existing social relations and dominant forms of power. However, even if this appears for Tafuri as somewhat of a *cul-de-sac* situation in which architecture's "sublime uselessness" becomes replaced by planning, from this very contradiction Lefebvre also aims to find an alternative framing of the relationship between architecture and politics.

4.2.4 Reading between the lines: Political revolution as architectural revolution

Can architecture be a politically transformative emancipatory project regardless of its integral connection to power and capital, as discussed in the previous chapter? In this chapter, building especially on the works by Stanek, I propose that in Lefebvre's political thought there also exists a second approach to architecture in which the prevailing social relations are not only manifested or mirrored but also produced anew (Stanek, 2011, p. 166; Stanek, 2014, pp. xiii–xvi). This trajectory is often misunderstood if Lefebvre's theory is evaluated only through a strict Marxist framework. Or, as Lefebvre is himself aware, this reading has "been discernible only by reading between the lines" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 419).

Regarding this, an important example can be found in Lefebvre's posthumous publication *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment* (2014b), written originally in 1973 but not published until 2014. Instead of thinking of architecture as a projection of existing external social relations (as Lefebvre suggests with his

[56] In this regard, it is important not to reduce this problematic solely to a similar criticism of the boredom of modern architectural style that we found, for example, in Jane Jacobs' seminal *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1962). What will be analysed further, especially in Article A2, is that even if Lefebvre's criticism of modernist planning is filled with hostility towards its aesthetics, typical in the post-1968 context (Aubert, Dessauce, Jungmann, & Stinco, 1999; Violeau, 2005; Buckley & Violeau, 2011), the problem should be not reduced only to a problem of style alone.

criticism of the architectural plan), it is defined in the book as a medium in which political subjectivities and their relations to financial, social, and cultural form are mediated and constructed anew (Stanek, 2014, p. xxxvi). Here, Lefebvre's emphasis can be seen as an attempt to (re)claim architecture's integral transformative potential beyond mere planning but also "political architecture" more broadly. Understood from this perspective, architecture for Lefebvre is a mode of politics itself that surpasses a narrow understanding of "political architecture" and "architecture of power" (religious architecture, military architecture, etc.), in which architecture is directly associated with "monumentality, political power, and the will to power" (Lefebvre, 2014b, p. 55).[57]

Following what was already argued in relation to Benjamin, the politics related to art and architecture is not limited to a representational and external framework of "political art". Instead, and similarly to Benjamin, for Lefebvre the more interesting question is whether the architectural form can itself "depict social contradictions" and hence become a dialectical force "full of tensions and distortions" (Lefebvre, 1991, p, 145). Here, architecture as a "production of space" becomes a privileged battlefield over the different political possibilities that unfold within the different constructions of everyday life:

> Thus, space may be said to embrace a multitude of intersections, each with its assigned location. As for representations of the relations of production, which subsume power relations, these too occur in space: space contains them in the form of buildings, monuments and works of art. Such frontal (and hence brutal) expressions of these relations do not completely crowd out their more clandestine or underground aspects. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33)

As will be argued especially in Article A3, this conceptualization makes it possible to theorize the political dimension of architecture and especially its utopian potentiality to provide political alternatives against Tafuri's position. What will be argued further in Article A3 is that for Lefebvre, different architectural utopias are never utopian in the sense that they are situated outside the existing world. Instead, for Lefebvre such utopias are "methods" for expanding the political imaginary of what is considered possible.[58]

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[57] According to Lefebvre, such "political architecture includes military architecture just as religious architecture includes the architecture of contemplation. Fortresses, palaces, and castles go together. Power always attempts to present itself and represent itself in the eternal, through imperishable architectural symbols and works. Power is exercised on a space, which it dominates and protects; there, it plants its symbols and its instruments, which are inseparable" (Lefebvre, 2014b, p. 13).

[58] Such utopianism for Lefebvre does not involve utopias of fixed plans. Instead, it is utopianism "as a method", an idea later popularized by Ruth Levitas (2013): "I want to make myself quite clear: the new utopianism we can see developing all around us really is new. Utopianism is testing itself out; it is living itself; imagination is becoming a lived experience, something experimental; instead of combating or repressing rationality, it is incorporating it. Only a kind of reasoned but dialectical use of utopianism will permit us to illuminate the present in the name of the future, to criticize what has been accomplished, to criticize bourgeois or socialist everyday life; and that, according to the greatest nonconformist thinkers, is a basic element in revolutionary thought. Only this dialectical use of utopianism as a method will allow us to programme our thought and our lives" (Lefebvre, 1995, p. 357).

By emphasizing the internal transformative political potentiality of architecture, Lefebvre comes close to such heterodox-Marxist thinkers as Antonio Gramsci and his concept of hegemony (Lefebvre 1991, pp. 10–11; Kipfer, 2008).[59] The connection between Lefebvre and Gramsci is made perhaps most famously by Fredric Jameson. In the article "Architecture and the critique of ideology" (2000, published originally in 1982), Jameson famously suggested that there remains a theory of "Gramscian architecture" to be written and Lefebvre provides a fruitful approach for this:

> It will therefore no longer be 'idealist' in the bad, old sense to suggest that counterhegemony means producing and keeping alive a certain alternate 'idea' of space, of urban, daily life, and the like. It would then no longer be so immediately significant (or so practically and historically crippling) that architects in the West do not—owing to the private property system—have the opportunity to project and construct collective ensembles that express and articulate original social relations (and needs and demands) of a collective type: the essential would rather be that they are able to form conceptions and utopian images of such projects, against which to develop a self-consciousness of their concrete activities in this society (it being understood, in Tafuri's spirit, that such collective projects would only practically and materially be possible after a systemic transformation of society). But such utopian ideas are as objective as material buildings: their possibilities—the possibility of conceiving such new space—have conditions of possibility as rigorous as any material artefact. (Jameson, 2000, p. 454)

Here we return to the productive contradiction between architecture and existing social relations that was also crucial for Benjamin.[60] For Lefebvre, as for Benjamin, architecture is not only a projection of social relations but an active medium for configuring these relations anew. Architecture is not only a site for the reproduction of power relations but also a centre of the struggle over new social relations and development for new subjectivities (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 54). New social relations are produced through architectural experimentation as "the conditions of new social relations necessarily mature within the very mode of production they are going to surpass" (Stanek, 2011, p. 166).

As such, political revolution is also an architectural revolution and architectural revolution is also a political revolution:

> Could we refer to such a transformation of the building as an architectural revolution? Why not? It goes without saying that this project alone is incapable of changing the world. Setting aside the relationships of production doesn't change them; on the contrary, it highlights their role, their importance. The same holds true for political institutions and the role of the State, capitalist or otherwise. The architectural revolution

[59] Hegemony for Gramsci refers to the struggle of common sense, what is considered possible in a given societal conjuncture, and how it is mediated especially through culture. According to Gramsci, "Every social stratum has its own 'common sense' and its own 'good sense', which are basically the most widespread conceptions of life and of man" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326).

[60] As Kouvelakis summarizes Lefebvre's argument, "Just as the production of space has been a key issue for the survival of capitalism, so the 'test of space' is unavoidable for any attempt at a revolutionary transformation of social relations" (Kouvelakis, 2008, p. 724).

> will not replace other forms of upheaval and subversion. But how can another life, another world arises when what are referred to by so many with an impoverished vocabulary and inadequate terminology as "the environment of everyday life," or "decor," or the "morphological" have not changed? (Lefebvre, 2014b, p. 27)

Political change therefore begins from the ruptures and fractures in the dominant space that elaborate new social relations within new spatial forms:

> A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed, it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space – though its impact need not occur at the same rate, or with equal force, in each of these areas." (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 54)

The trajectory is present especially at the ending of the production of space and what Lefebvre calls the "differential spaces" embedded within the existing conditions and its contradictions in space. Such an approach translates the famous productive contradiction in the prevailing modes of production between the productive forces (labour power and means of production) and relations of production (social relations), as identified by Marx (1971; see also Postone, 1993) in the discussion of space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 357). For Lefebvre, "the contradictions of space thus make the contradictions of social relations operative" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 365).

In this regard, architecture is not only a representation of the existing mode of production (in the form of *plan*) but also a *project* for possible and alternative societies through experimental architectural projects (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 148). For Lefebvre, such architectural projects elaborate "a different society, a different mode of production, where social practice would be governed by different conceptual determinations" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 419). According to Stanek, Lefebvre understands the architectural project as "neither a prediction nor a projection, but research on tendencies that emerge within current society" (Stanek, 2011, p. 167).[61] Whereas the architectural plan is integrally linked to external political forces and the existing world, architectural projects reconfigure what is considered possible in a given political conjuncture.

What kinds of examples of successful politically transformative architecture and "architectural revolutions" does Lefebvre have to offer? It is often said that Lefebvre leaves his idea of alternative and counter-hegemonic spaces frustratingly undefined (Harvey, 2000, p. 182; Coleman, 2014, p. 26). In previous research, however, some examples have been outlined. The most accurate account of Lefebvre's empirical discussion of architectural projects is given by Lukasz Stanek (2011; 2014; 2017). According to Stanek, Lefebvre's theory of

[61] Stanek even suggests that Lefebvre's emphasis on architectural projects ultimately surpasses the dichotomy between revolution or reform, as famously outlined, for instance, by Lenin and Luxemburg. Instead, "Lefebvre's rejection of the contradiction between reform and revolution was founded on his conviction that the possibility of changing society as a whole must be sought within this very society" (Stanek, 2011, p. 246).

"architectural projects" that bear transformative political potential was influenced especially by historical examples such as the Paris Commune or Charles Fourier's Phalanstery, French experimental architectural culture in the 1960s, including especially Constant Nieuwenhuys, Richardo Bofill, and Yona Friedman, and the urban renewal proposal for New Belgrade submitted by Lefebvre alongside the architects Serge Renaudie and Pierre Guilbaud (regarding the proposal, see also Lefebvre, Renaudie, & Guilbaud 2009). Nathaniel Coleman (2015) points out the parallel between Lefebvre and the anti-functionalist Aldo van Eyck. Richard Milgrom (2008) suggests that the best architectural comparison of Lefebvre's thought can be found in the architectural work by Lucien Kroll.

Moreover, as Tahl Kaminer shows, Lefebvre's influence on architectural culture is present in figures such as Bernard Tschumi, one of the architects aiming to most systematically "realize Lefebvre" (see also Patel, 2016). According to Tschumi himself:

> Around 1968, together with many in my generation of young architects, I was concerned with the need for an architecture that might change society—that could have a political or social effect. However, the effect of the events of 1968 has been to demonstrate, both through facts and through serious critical analysis, the difficulty of this imperative. From Marxist commentators to Henri Lefebvre and to the Situationists, the modes of analysis changed considerably, but all shared a skeptical view of the power of architecture to alter social or political structures. (Tschumi, 1996, p. 5)

As Kaminer suggests, "both Lefebvre and Tschumi identified the possibility of architecture assuming radical political agency, but neither could outline a prescription for the designer interested in socio-political efficacy; rather, efficacy did not correspond to the designer's intentions" (Kaminer, 2017, p. 156). Lefebvre's analysis, mediated by Tschumi and others, seems to thus promote an alternative conceptualization of architectural politics beyond the historical burden of modernist planning and reformist politics. As such, it is also easy to identify a recurring anti-modernist stance in Lefebvre's work: to avoid architecture becoming mere planning is to reject its reformist tendency. For architecture to have any critical political vocation is to resist architecture turning into mere planning, which was especially the historical failure of modernist utopian attempts to change society by design, as outlined also by Tafuri. Here, whether in reformist (the Bauhaus, Le Corbusier, New Frankfurt, Red Vienna) or revolutionary forms (constructivism), architecture's political vocation is reduced to an implementation of external socio-political change.

However, in this study I also wish to point out that there is a more complex trajectory present in Lefebvre's thought, as his idea of architectural project as "architectural revolution" also has a paradoxical relationship precisely with modernism and avant-garde (see also Stanek, 2011, p. 247). Even if modernism, in a similar way as suggested by Tafuri, ultimately became an instrument for capitalist development, it simultaneously makes an important connection

between the possibility of producing counter-hegemonic social relations within space and architecture.[62]

As such, there is also a continuum of the utopian aspirations of modern architecture present in Lefebvre's anti-modernism, namely, that architecture can itself take the position of radical political agency as a counter-hegemonic activity. For Lefebvre, similarly to Benjamin, historically it was precisely modern architecture that challenged the traditional bourgeois way of perceiving the world and hence shifted the focus from external and "formal" political representations to the configuration of politics integrally embedded in the architectural medium:

> Politically speaking, the architectural revolution can be viewed as having completed the democratic revolution that destroyed monumentality and as having surpassed the bourgeois era that merely multiplied the number of buildings. This brought about a limited transcendence of politics as such, necessary but not sufficient. To turn the world upside down using theory, the imaginary, and dream, to contribute to its multiform practical transformation, without being restricted to a limited form (political, "cultural," ideological, and, therefore, dogmatic), in this way the meaning of our initiative is given. (Lefebvre, 2014b, p. 28)

Lefebvre hence rejects the logic of modern architecture and its utopianism understood as planning but also hints that, regarding the renewal of existing social relations through architectural revolution, there is *a lesson to be learned* (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 59). This constitutes a paradox in Lefebvre's thinking of the political efficacy of architecture that, I claim, has not been fully acknowledged. While Lefebvre is critical of modernist ideology of planning that reduces architecture to external politics and the economy, it is precisely modernism that provides a model for thinking of an architectural revolution as political revolution – an approach that, according to Jameson, detaches Lefebvre from Tafuri and other Marxist thinkers of architecture.

In Article A2, I attempt to show that it is possible, however, to overcome this paradox by discussing Lefebvre's complex reading of the Bauhaus, perhaps the most important articulation of modernist utopia that architectural design can change society, a position that remains important yet highly contested also today.

[62] Here, what seems relevant is also Lefebvre's critical encounter with architectural historians such as Anatole Kopp and Claude Schnaidt aiming to defend the revolutionary project of modern architecture against the accusations of the ´68 new left generation and Lefevre as its godfather. While engaging with new anti-modernist experimental culture, Lefebvre was also largely informed by Kopp and Schnaidt, who strongly emphasized that the politicization of architecture in relation to questions such as housing needs to be done with the legacy of modernism. While Lefebvre disagreed a lot with their project, this connection is nevertheless important to acknowledge (Stanek, 2011, p. 149).

4.3 Jacques Rancière

Alongside Lefebvre and Benjamin, the study discusses the relevance of the political thought of Jacques Rancière for addressing the relationship between architecture and politics. Rancière's (b. 1941) reading of art, aesthetics, politics, and their intertwinements has become a standard point of reference for projects attempting to understand what political art is, what it is not, and what it could be.[63] The study aims to show that this includes a rearticulation of the political dimension of architecture as well, even if Rancière does not systematically address the problem of architectural design in a similar way as he addresses, for example, cinema or literature.

As was the case with Benjamin and Lefebvre, Rancière's thought does not follow any strict philosophical system. Rancière strongly opposes the idea that a particular school of thought (such as the Marxist structuralism proposed by his teacher Louis Althusser) would have privileged access to knowledge. Instead, Rancière's thought is first and foremost based on a rejection "to prioritize ontology or some other form of first philosophy" (see Chambers, 2013, pp. 18–21). Rancière calls this a "method of equality". It is based on the idea that potentially anybody from any perspective can contribute to "a new fabric of common experience or a new common sense, upon which new forms of political subjectivization can be implemented" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 280).

Rancière's conceptualization of politics, similarly to that of Benjamin and Lefebvre, emphasizes the emancipatory rather than governmental aspect. Rancière does not limit political thought to a critique power (e.g. Foucault), ideology (e.g. Althusser), forms of capital (e.g. Bourdieu), or alienation (e.g. the Frankfurt School). For Rancière, politics is not about revealing or resisting different power relations and veiled ideologies. Instead, politics is about surpassing such power relations in the first place and finding alternative political logic "that is never set up in advance" (Rancière, 1999, p. 32). In this regard, Rancière's understanding of politics necessarily implies an emancipation from the existing political framework of the society from below. Politics is precisely about reclaiming the position of who is entitled to speak, act, know, and have the capability and agency for political action.

Rather than being limited only to political science and theory, Rancière examines such politics from the point of view of art and aesthetics.[64] Aesthetic activity for Rancière, similarly to Benjamin Lefebvre, is not just an extension of external political ideas and ideologies but instead attempts to create a new sensible order which is itself at the core of the politics. According to Rancière, "politics is an 'aesthetic' affair, since it is about what is seen and what can be said

[63] For a general introduction to Rancière's political thought, see, for example, May (2008); Rockhill & Watts (2009); Deranty (2010); Ross (2012); Davis (2010); Tanke (2011); Bowman & Stamp (2011); Chanter (2019); Shaw (2017); Bray (2017); and Panagia (2018).
[64] "My personal interests have most often drawn me to literature and cinema, certainly more than to questions of so-called political science, which in themselves have never interested me very much" (Rancière, 2017a, p, 130).

about it, about what is felt as common or private, and about experiences of time and space" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 283).

How does Rancière's conceptualization of aesthetic politics resonate with the general framework of this study in attempting to think of architecture as a spatial configuration of politics? First, we may start by mentioning some reservations: Rancière has not produced a systematic study on architecture in a similar way as he has on literature and cinema, for instance. As Gabriel Rockhill has importantly pointed out, Rancière to some extent scorns the political significance of architecture (Rockhill 2014a; 2014b).

At the same time, however, it seems that from all forms of art perhaps architecture is something that is most compatible with Rancière's thought. If for Rancière political art is primarily about spatial ruptures vis-à-vis the prevailing social order and existing space, then architecture does this in a literal sense. If according to Rancière the straightforward notion of political art needs to be replaced by a more ambiguous aesthetic experience, then it is precisely the history of architecture that grants us access to transcend this distinction.[65] And finally, if according to Rancière it is not possible to separate the social and political forms of revolution from an aesthetic revolution, then architecture is, as Rancière suggests in passing, the "paradigm of social art" as it operates between these two areas (Rancière 2013b, pp. 135–137).

4.3.1 Rancière's redefinition of political philosophy

Rancière became a globally acclaimed political theorist especially with his book *Disagreement*, which was originally published in 1995 and translated into English in 1999. *Disagreement* examines politics from the point of view of the "part that has no part". It is a part that does not fit into the existing social and political distribution of society (Rancière, 1999). The disagreeing part, miscalculated in the political constitution of a given community, reveals a particular element of political life that, according to Rancière, has yet been neglected in political philosophy from Plato onwards. The part that has no part does not fit with the existing consensus, which for Rancière means an allocation of proper ways of speaking, acting, and inhabiting the existing political space. The part that has no part cannot be represented politically because it cannot be articulated from the point of view of the existing distribution (Rancière, 1999, p. xi).

The part that has no part is simultaneously a philosophical but also concrete articulation of a specific political group that has no logos, voice, or political reason in a given community. Paradoxically, however, it is the part that makes politics possible in the first place. The part that has no part introduces a disagreement about what is considered the normal status quo and consensus by blurring the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, forms of visibility and

[65] According to Nadir Lahiji "what Rancière says about the artwork in the aesthetic regime of art is equally applicable to the 'architecture-work': that is, any building, like any object, can potentially rise to the level of aesthetic experience insofar as any building can disrupt the ordinary sense experience and, therefore, reconfigure the 'distribution of the sensible'" (Lahiji, 2014b, p. 63).

invisibility, speech and noise, political spaces, and apolitical spaces (Rancière, 1999, p. 11). In short, it reveals that what might be considered common and consensus in a given community is nevertheless not shared by everyone.

By outlining the difference between consensus and disagreement, Rancière manages to provide two radically different conceptualization of politics that are nevertheless interlinked: that of police and that of politics. The concept of police, which is not to be limited only to law enforcement, refers to the collection of norms, ways of doing, and making that maintain the normal and proper order. "Police" is a name for putting everything in a particular order, including the hierarchies and places in society:

> The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees those bodies are assigned by the name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise. It is police law, for example, that traditionally turns the workplace into a private space not regulated by the ways of seeing and saying proper to what is called the public domain, where the worker's having a part is strictly defined by the remuneration of his work. Policing is not so much the 'disciplining' of bodies as a rule governing their appearing, a configuration of occupations and the properties of the spaces where these occupations are distributed. (Rancière, 1999, p. 29)

For many, however, this is the standard and everyday use of the concept of politics. For example, parliamentary or municipal politics is far closer to police than politics if we accept this definition. But why is not politics then, according to Rancière? For Rancière, the governing techniques of police (or politics in the conventional sense) allocate the political capabilities, agencies, and possibilities in advance. [66] As an opposite to police, politics is about a creation of disagreement by the part that has no part in the prevailing space and the existing "political" configuration:

> I now propose to reserve the term politics for an extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing: whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration – that of the part of those who have no part. This break is manifest in a series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined. Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise. (Rancière, 1999, pp. 29–30)

[66] Even if this is primarily a theoretical argument, it can be grasped also from more concrete standpoint. Todd May (2008), for example, shows how Rancière's emphasis can be taken to understand the complex struggle for "equality" at the heart of social and political conflicts. As May shows, equality is not something that needs to be awarded or granted by the state (as is often the case, for example, in theories of recognition). Instead, the struggle over identity is a subversive process that also declassifies prevailing identities and hierarchies aesthetically.

What is especially relevant in the definitions of police and politics is their spatial dimensions. For Rancière, politics is about a spatial contestation of the police logic that puts everything in the proper place.

Whereas Rancière's *Disagreement* and especially its reception produced a strong dichotomy between politics and police, he has later shifted his focus towards processes he calls "the distribution of the sensible" (*le partage du sensible*). The distribution of the sensible is "a relation between occupations and equipment, between being in a specific space and time, performing specific activities, and being endowed with capacities of seeing, saying, and doing that 'fit' those activities" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 275). Many commentators have suggested that the distribution of the sensible ultimately surpasses a strong distinction between police and politics by showing their internal dynamics and intertwinement (regarding this, see, for example, Rockhill, 2016, p. 220).[67] From this perspective, politics is a conflict between different sensorial and aesthetic conceptualizations of what is considered common sense mediated by the distribution of the sensible:

> Politics is commonly viewed as the practice of power or the embodiment of collective wills and interests and the enactment of collective ideas. Now, such enactments or embodiments imply that you are taken into account as subjects sharing in a common world, making statements and not simply noise, discussing things located in a common world and not in your own fantasy. What really deserves the name of politics is the cluster of perceptions and practices that shape this common world. Politics is first of all a way of framing, among sensory data, a specific sphere of experience. It is a partition of the sensible, of the visible and the sayable, which allows (or does not allow) some specific data to appear; which allows or does not allow some specific subjects to designate them and speak about them. It is a specific intertwining of ways of being, ways of doing and ways of speaking. (Rancière, 2015, p. 160)

Here there emerges more nuanced analysis of the distinction between police (maintaining of aesthetic order) and politics (ruptures of this order) (Rancière, 2009a, p. 275). Politics in this broad sense is about the distribution of the sensible and in a more narrow sense subversion of the given distribution of the sensible: what is considered common, visible, sayable, and seemingly natural and neutral (Rancière, 2013, p. 8). Throughout the study this is referred to as spatial configuration, which includes both the maintenance of existing social relations and spatial divisions of society and their integral contestation and reconfiguration.

[67] As Rancière also himself has later suggested, "If the distinction between politics and the police can be useful, it is not to allow us to say: politics is on this side, police is on the opposite side. It is to allow us to understand the form of their intertwinement. We rarely, if ever, face a situation where we can say: this is politics in its purity. But we ceaselessly face situations where we have to discern how politics encroaches on matters of the police and the police on matters of politics" (Rancière, 2009a, pp. 287–288).

4.3.2 Art, aesthetics, politics

As was shown in the previous section, politics for Rancière is based on a subversion of the existing common sense.[68] In this regard, aesthetics needs to be understood as the integral core of politics, as "politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time" (Rancière, 2013b, p. 8).

Before examining this from the point of view of space, built environment, and architectural design, it is useful to look further at how such a conceptualization of aesthetics and politics is linked to Rancière's understanding of political art in general. Attempting to argue for a more comprehensive understanding of aesthetics as a political category, Rancière's work also elaborates the political significance of various artistic practices and their relationship to the existing distribution of the sensible in particular:

> It is on the basis of this primary aesthetics that it is possible to raise the question of 'aesthetic practices' as I understand them, that is forms of visibility that disclose artistic practices, the place they occupy, what they 'do' or 'make' from the standpoint of what is common to the community. Artistic practices are 'ways of doing and making' that intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain to modes of being and forms of visibility. (Rancière, 2013b, p. 8)

Rancière's understanding of artistic practices is linked to the conceptual and historical model that he calls the aesthetic regime of art, in which "art as a notion of designating a form of specific experience has only existed in the West since the end of eighteenth century" (Rancière, 2013b, p. ix).

The regime of art is for Rancière "a specific relationship between the practices, forms of visibility and modes of intelligibility that enable us to identify the products of these latter belonging to art or non-art" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 28). According to Rancière, three major regimes (ways of organizing the visible) of art have dominated Western thought. These include the ethical regime of images, the representative regime of art, and the aesthetic regime of art (Rancière, 2013b, p. 12). In the ethical regime of images, art's relation to society "is a matter of knowing in what way images' mode of being affects the ethos, the mode of being of individuals and communities" (Rancière 2013b, 16). In this regime, the efficacy of art is evaluated only in terms of how it serves the political goals of a given community. Art has a didactic purpose to strengthen the ethos of a given community. The origins of the ethical regime can be dated especially to Plato and his (in)famous banishment of the poets from the ideal state.

In the representative regime of art, originating from Aristotle's critique of Plato, art is liberated from its instrumental need to directly serve and instantly

[68] "This subversion implies the reframing of a common sense. A common sense does not mean a consensus but, on the contrary, a polemical place, a confrontation between opposite common senses or opposite ways of framing what is common" (Rancière, 2009a, p. 277).

supply the communal ethos. Instead, art is considered to be a mimetic and imitational form of action "and it consequently defines proper ways of doing and making as well as means of assessing imitations" (Rancière, 2013b, p. 17). Culminating in 17th century classicism, the representational regime of art addresses the connection between representations of artistic values with their internal hierarchies that also reflect broader social hierarchies (high art versus common culture).

However, in the aesthetic regime "art no longer occurs via a division within ways of doing and making, but it is based on distinguishing a sensible mode of being specific to artistic products" (Rancière 2013b, p. 18). Beyond direct political commitment, aesthetics in the aesthetic regime of art entails "a specific sensory experience that holds the premises of both a new world of Art and a new life for individuals and the community" (Rancière, 2010, p. 113). Rather than limiting aesthetics to a narrow sense of (especially high) art or beauty, Rancière considers aesthetics in terms of (especially political) experience. Both existing social relations and alternative political modalities are linked to sensual perceptions that are at the same time an individual experience but the foundation and contestation of political community more broadly.

The aesthetic regime of art, its histories, and its contemporary relevance expand the ways in which "politics" is associated with "art". Rather than thinking of art as directly subordinated to didactic political purposes or art representing external social relations, the aesthetic regime is based on a specific aesthetic sensorium that organizes the modes of visibility, that is, bodies in their place and time.

The concept of aesthetic regime in Rancière's thought can be theoretically considered as a reworking of the ideas of German enlightenment philosophy (especially from William Baumgarten to Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller). It refers to a sensorial construction of common sense (*sensus communis*) precisely in the manner that Kant understood the concept "as the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience" (Rancière 2013b, 8). Alongside Kant, a frequent reference for Rancière is the work by Friedrich Schiller, to whom aesthetics is a mode of action that does not separate the political ends from the means of action; aesthetic experience finds its capability to be political only when it restrains itself from the direct sphere of politics.[69] For Rancière, such an idea of aesthetic and sensorial experience is a way to analyse the relationship of art and politics from a historical perspective but also as something that defines the way in which we understand

[69] For Rancière, there are three important points to be made regarding Schiller: "First, the autonomy staged by the aesthetic regime of art is not that of the work of art but of a mode of experience. Second, the 'aesthetic experience' is one of heterogeneity, such that, for the subject of that experience, it is also the dismissal of a certain autonomy. Third, the object of that experience is 'aesthetic', insofar as it is not, or at least not only, art. Such is the threefold relation that Schiller sets up in what can be called the 'original scene' of aesthetics" (Rancière, 2015, pp. 124–125).

such concepts as political art and critical art even today (Rancière, 2015, pp. 115–133). By providing this indirect vocabulary for linking arts and politics in the aesthetic regime of art, Rancière avoids the model for political art that subordinates artistic form to content or didactic purposes:

> The mistake that discussions of the politics of art have usually made is to assume an implicit teleology that transforms this reconfiguration of the sensible landscape into a simple instrument at the service of militant energies and strategies. In this, they have misrecognized the intimate paradox of the aesthetic regime, to wit: that aesthetic experience is politics insofar as it suspends the strategic logics that ensure the subjection of ends to means and sensibility to understanding. (Rancière, 2017a, p. 163)

Such a straightforward and causal understanding of political art is mistaken, according to Rancière, as it aims to solve the inherent paradox of the aesthetic regime of art that keeps it together in the first place. Through this paradox, "aesthetic art promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy and thrives on that ambiguity" (Rancière, 2015, p. 141). The attempt to keep this paradoxical ambiguity open defines Rancière's own political thought through the broad notion of the concept of aesthetics:

> Perhaps aesthetics is about this. It is not about producing an effect of revelation. It opposes the old practice of political art, which is supposed to produce some effect of awareness, revelation, and denunciation, for example, which, in a way, is an attempt to predetermine and predate some kind of technical effect of art. (Rancière, 2019, p. 23)

As Tina Chanters shows, "to be political, in the sense that Rancière embraces, art should not coalesce with the political ideas it calls for" (Chanters, 2017, p. 104). In short, art is political when it attempts to "change the sensible fabric of social relations rather than seizing institutional power" (Shaw, 2016, p. 150). Regarding this, Rancière has produced an interesting analysis of what he calls the politics of writing and literature. Such "politics" is not limited solely to the political values of writers. Nor can it be understood solely from direct political representations that mediate the reception of the book. Instead, literature has an inherent political agency in framing the boundaries of the common world and hence also shaping the idea of politics. The politics of art, in this case literature and writing, is something else than representation of politics:

> This politics of writing is, then, something completely different from the questions of representation by which politics and aesthetics are generally linked. Knowing how writers represent women, workers and foreigners has never really interested me. My interest has always been in writing as a way of cutting up the universal singular. (Rancière, 2017a, p. 131)

For Rancière, literature not only produces political messages for the reader via text, but it also has a micropolitical element that is related to the words, styles, and gestures. Such micropolitics "open new possibilities of aesthetic emancipation by producing art that is either imbricated in everyday social life or separated out from life as an autonomous domain that is heterogeneous to the

imperatives of the canons of taste and circulation of commodities" (Shaw, 2016, p. 14). Here "literature belongs to the reconfigurations of forms of experience through which political subjectivities take hold. But that doesn't mean that literature is directly political" (Rancière, 2017a, p. 195).

In this study, it is asserted that the same idea can be found in Rancière's comments concerning the politics of architecture. What is proposed through the examination of this is that the political efficacy of art and architecture is always contingent and cannot be reduced to representations of external political ideologies. Instead, what is more interesting is architecture's capability to configure the scope of politics through the design process itself.

4.3.3 Politics as a distribution and redistribution of spaces

> In the end everything in politics turns on the distribution of spaces. What are these? How do they function? Why are they there? Who can occupy them? For me, political action always acts upon the social as the litigious distribution of places and roles. It is always a matter of knowing who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done to it. (Rancière, 2003, p. 201)

Before going into a direct analysis of architecture in Rancière's work, it is also important to acknowledge the strong spatial dimension of politics in Rancière's work in general.[70] As already mentioned, Rancière thinks of the constitution of community, both its maintenance and contestation, in spatial terms.[71] Whereas politics is often defined as a temporal process in which political change is understood from a historical and dynamic perspective (Koselleck, 2018; Palonen, 2006), for Rancière politics is primarily a spatial (re)configuration of what is considered common in given distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2009a, p. 284). The configuration of political space can either reinforce or contest the existing distribution of the sensible. In this sense, both police and politics function spatially:

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[70] According to Rancière, the idea of spacing is present already in the etymology of democracy: "Democracy is originally, and simultaneously, a verbal and spatial spacing. It is not the continuous fabric that guarantees the cohesion of the common, but a lacunary and evolving fabric that assimilates new 'spacers' by making words go from one register to another" (Rancière, 2017a, p. 147). Elsewhere Rancière also suggests that this is not limited only to the symbolic dimension of public space. Instead, "speaking of the 'space' of democracy is not a mere metaphor. The delimitation of the *demos* is at once a material and a symbolical matter. More precisely it is a new form of (dis)connection between the material and the symbolical. The institution of democracy meant the invention of a new topography, the creation of a space made of disconnected places against the aristocratic space that connected the material privilege of the landowners with the symbolical power of the tradition. This disconnection is at the core of the opposition between politics and police. So, the issue of space has to be thought of in terms of distribution: distribution of places, boundaries of what is in or out, central or peripheral, visible or invisible" (Rancière, 2011, p. 6).

[71] As Mustafa Dikeç suggests, "For Rancière politics is made possible by subjects configuring, transforming, appropriating space for the manifestation of dissensus, for the coexistence of two worlds in one. They constitute themselves as political subjects in and through space, open new spaces of debate, transform the proper space of circulation into a space of parade, or the proper space of work into a space where political capacity can be demonstrated. Space is not merely a container here; it is through spatialisation that politics is inaugurated" (Dikeç, 2015, p. 98).

> The police is that which says that here, on this street, there's nothing to see and so nothing to do but move along. It asserts that the space for circulating is nothing but the space of circulation. Politics, by contrast, consists in transforming this space of 'moving-along', of circulation, into a space for the appearance of a subject: the people, the workers, the citizens. It consists in re-figuring space, that is in what is to be done, to be seen and to be named in it. It is the instituting of a dispute over the distribution of the sensible, over that *nemeïn* that founds every *nomos* of the community. (Rancière, 2015, p. 45)

Mustafa Dikeç has elaborated this further by outlining two explicit spatial scenes implied in Rancière's conceptualization of politics related to space: the scene of police and the scene of politics. According to Dikeç, "police uses space to identify, place, order and fix, because it aims to achieve stability" (2015, pp. 98–99). Police is spatial logic of putting everything in proper places and divisions. The division of spaces in society (culminating ultimately in the distinction between public and private spheres) is an integral part of police logic organizing society and hence reinforcing structural, juridical, and institutional power relations. However, this division is constantly contested by another political activity, such as protests in public space, in which the "part that has no part" becomes visible in space where they normally have no business of being seen. Various dissident spatial practices associated with politics challenge this stability, as they resist "the places and placings of the police by creating new spaces for the verification of equality when this is 'wronged' by the established order" (Dikeç, 2015, pp. 99; see also Hirvonen, 2010).

Reclaiming one's own space is precisely this type of moment of politics, as it contests the spatial and temporal coordinates of the distribution of the sensible. Urban uprising, revolutions, and protests are thus both aesthetic and concrete spatial disorders towards the sovereign geometries of power:

> Political demonstration makes visible that which had no reason to be seen; it places one world in another – for instance, the world where the factory is a public space in that where it is considered private, the world where workers speak, and speak about the community, in that where their voices are mere cries expressing pain. This is the reason why politics cannot be identified with the model of communicative action. This model presupposes partners that are already pre-constituted as such and discursive forms that entail a speech community, the constraint of which is always explicable. (Rancière, 2015, p. 46)

The idea is present throughout Rancière's political thought from early on. Already in his *Proletarian Nights: The Workers Dream in Nineteenth-Century France* (based on Rancière's dissertation and originally published in French in 1981) examining the social history of the 19th century French working class, Rancière emphasizes how working-class revolutions are not reducible to revolts against capital or sovereign power but primarily attempts to reclaim the space for alternative political subjectivities. From the 19th century onwards, urban revolts have, according to Rancière, been attempts to create a space beyond the representation of workers and its part in the existing distribution. Rancière examines how workers aimed to reclaim nightlife as a space and time for

activities (drinking, gambling, poetry, love, friendship) that challenged the spatial existence of workers destined to work, as defined from above. The proletariat during night time (and in the night space) can become other than plain workers, as the spatial police code of the factory does not apply to them at night.

Another example of such spatial logic of subversive politics found in Rancière's thought is the interpretation of Rosa Parks' spatial occupation of a bus seat reserved only for the white population (Rancière, 2009b). By occupying the space in the bus in Montgomery in 1955, Parks rejected the segregated distribution of the sensible that distributed people into different spaces based on the colour of their skin. As we now know, this occupation of the "wrong" space ultimately had tremendous political effects, even if the act of sitting in a bus is in essence rather trivial (similar way as the proletariat reading poetry at night).

The same ambiguous logic can be found, for example, in the contemporary urban protest movements (Occupy Wall Street, Nuit debout, Gilets jaunes, Extinction Rebellion, Black Lives Matter "subverting the normal use of the streets" and hence reclaiming that space for purposes that have no part in the existing distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2019, p. 15).

Here we have articulated some key spatial assumptions of politics in Rancière's thought. For Rancière, politics is the moment when the space we consider so natural that it is even no longer acknowledged becomes challenged, not through direct resistance but as an act of providing a new sensorial perception of the world that contests the current distribution of the sensible. In a similar way as for Benjamin and Lefebvre, Rancière strongly maintains that political change is far from finished if it does not produce new ways of perceiving the world through new spatial divisions.

4.3.4 From architectural monumentality to architectural micropolitics: Rancière's conceptualization of architecture

> Is there a possibility of a subversion of the urban space directly produced by architectural design? It seems to be that architecture today is in a strange situation in regard to the idea of "subverting" the space. It thinks of subversion in terms of opposition to its tradition, which is to construct solid things. (Rancière, 2019, p. 15)

> The politics of aesthetics involves a multiplicity of small ruptures, of small shifts, that refuse the blackmail of radical subversion. (Rancière, 2017a, p. 242)

In the last subchapter, it was shown that Rancière thinks of politics primarily as a spatial reconfiguration of the existing distribution of the sensible. Given the centrality of space in Rancière's conceptualization of politics, it seems odd that he has not further elaborated his thesis in relation to architecture and urbanism. But can one even fit architecture into such a definition of politics, given that political subversion for Rancière seems to always emerge fleetingly from below? For Rancière, political space needs to be ultimately improper space, something that is in a dissensual position regarding the prevailing distribution of the sensible. Naturally the production of such counter-space is evident, for example,

in cinematic and literary space, but the relationship to the existing distribution of the sensible is more complex.

If politics is about occupying streets and buildings in a manner that goes against their dominant use determined by the police in the existing distribution of the sensible, would not architecture and planning be primarily on the side of the police maintaining the order? The quick answer would be yes, generally speaking. However, what this study proposes is that the question is more complex and can be articulated through the two different conceptualizations of architecture present in Rancière's thought. For Rancière, the politics of architecture is not only limited to the maintenance of police order. Instead, it is also a politics that aims to cut across and contest the broader production and portioning of the existing distribution of the sensible.

As Rancière maintains, especially in his discussion with the architect and architectural theorist Mark Foster Gage, there are two different conceptualizations of architecture's relationship to politics. The first type is associated with an idea of "modelling spaces" and the second with "disturbing the uses of space" (Rancière, 2019, p. 23). What is proposed in this study is that these positions can also be taken to illustrate how Rancière's views on political architecture can be interpreted from a similar perspective as his more famous distinction between political art (such as political literature) and politics of art (such as politics of writing) mentioned in the previous section.

First, the idea of modelling spaces promotes an instrumental use of architecture when it comes to architecture's political dimension. Historically, it is based on political architecture understood as some kind of extension of the logic police: the purpose of architecture is to realize external political goals in a manner in which "design determines use" from above (Rancière, 2019, p. 20). Similarly to Lefebvre, this, as Rancière shows, covers the history of modern reformist architectural planning from the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier onwards, in which "architecture was part of this big project (…) of reshaping all forms of life" (Rancière, 2019, p. 21).

Here, it would be easy to make a distinction between modern reformist architecture as an extension of police and later small-scale, critical spatial practices as an example of insurgent political practices. Paradoxically, however, as Rancière suggests, the belief that architectural design can automatically generate plausible political effects in a reformist manner is today found precisely in activist and socially engaged architectural strategies that are often framed as anti-modernist with their small-scale practices and artistic-activist interventions (Rancière, 2019, p. 21).

Regarding this, especially the idea of so-called participatory urbanism as a tool to fix societal problems, particularly in deprived suburbs, provides a great example of how seemingly democratic and inclusive urban planning often forecloses the scope of politics and treats the inhabitants of these suburbs as a mere problem of governance with no active political agency of their own.[72] The

[72] A further elaboration of this can be found in Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells* (2012), which applies Rancière to the so-called "social turn of art" in community art, participatory art, and

argument is often veiled in the forms of participatory practices or active citizenship; if only there would be better design, community art, and participatory practices in the segregated neighbourhoods, the passive citizens with their unemployment checks would turn into active citizens and start taking responsibility for their own community (Miessen, 2010).

Rancière's work in both politics and political art shows in general that the return of politics and the foreclosure of politics are often the same thing. In a similar vein, one could easily add that the recent participatory practices in urban planning and architecture often taken as an example of grassroots democracy leave us little room for political agencies. Indeed, the idea that an immigrant or the unemployed in suburbs need to be activated via participatory urbanism is one of the most dominant ideas of contemporary policing.

Whereas it is easy to mock modernist architects and planners for their naïve technocratic and utopian belief that architecture can change society for the better and for everyone, the contemporary engaged strategies run the risk of continuing the same utopian belief but with even lesser understanding of the political conflicts. As a band-aid for the structural inequality of society, we are offered a vague promise of the sense of community which will magically lead to plausible political effects.

Rancière provides an interesting example of the design of La Grande Borne housing estate in Grigny near Paris. The design of the area by architect Émile Aillaud was largely a result of an anti-modernist and anti-functionalist planning ideology in which the monotonous modernist environment was considered to be inherently alienating and hence one of the root causes of urban poverty and crime. To reject such alienating tendencies, Aillaud incorporated different shapes, forms, and colours so that the resident would be able to get a better sense of the place in the area. However, this paradoxically led to an even bigger social disaster:

> This idea that design determines use is at play even in anti-functionalist projects. One always blames Le Corbusier and the straight residential complexes built by his followers. But the forms of architecture and urban planning that were conceived against his "functionalist" principles obeyed the same idea that use follows design and sometimes they produced still more disastrous effects. We have a famous case in France with the city of La Grande Borne in the outskirts of Paris that was conceived as an anti–Le Corbusier way of dealing with architecture: no big buildings, no straight lines, and only small buildings, with curved lines and many colors, different kinds of units, many useless places and artifacts, and a vast green space in the middle left to the imagination of the inhabitants. It has become the worst neighborhood in France with the highest rate of violence, drugs, and crime. (…) Of course, you cannot say it is the fault of the architect's utopia. But at the same time, you see the shortcomings of the idea that the designer of a residential space can determine its use. (Rancière, 2019, p, 20)

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also urban planning and architecture to some extent. For Bishop, the relationship between socially engaged participatory art and politics is taken for granted in a way that does not acknowledge how historically critical artistic practices have aimed to not only reflect political themes but critically open up the scope and the meaning of political experience.

Here the reduction of architecture directly to politics in a manner often traced to modernist planning ("design determines use") appears in seemingly anti-modernist form. The utopian idea that "society can be changed through design" no longer appears in the mass reform of housing, as was the case in modernism but through community and participatory-oriented artistic interventions with a belief that incorporation of art, the design of one single mural, more colours in façade, or artificial recreational green spaces in segregated neighbourhood can automatically produce plausible political effects. (Rancière, 2019, p. 20.)

However, at the same time there emerges another conceptualization of politics inherent in architecture that in a similar way is linked to the continuation of modernism, or what Rancière calls the aesthetic regime of art (Świtek, 2014). According to Nadir Lahiji, this continues the Schillerian and Kantian trajectory of aesthetics as political experience:

> It is then the question of how, as an "experience," architecture can enter the aesthetic experience and, to put it in Rancière's terms, insofar as it is an experience, how it can "open a rift (écart) with ordinary forms of experience." As for Rancière, "the rift (écart) which aesthetic experience once opens up is first and foremost a space of equality." Aesthetic experience, in other words, carries an egalitarian promise, and this must be our point of departure when we put architecture under the sign of the political. (Lahiji, 2014b, p. 55)

Here the political efficacy of architecture is related to "disturbing the uses of space rather than modelling spaces" (Rancière, 2019, p. 23). Such "politics" is primarily micropolitical, as Rancière suggests in his collaboration with architect Farshid Moussavi. As suggested in the previous section, such micropolitics is not limited to representation of politics. It does not focus on expected political outcomes but on architectural practice itself that generates singular experiences and an alternative aesthetic framework that might also become (but not necessarily) politically subversive in terms of how people become attached to buildings. (Moussavi, 2022.)

In the article "Rancière and the Metapolitical Framing: of Architecture: Reconstructing Brodsky and Utkin's Voyage", Michael J. Ostwald calls such micropolitical approaches metapolitics (to some extent confusingly). However, Ostwald's article nevertheless importantly shows how Rancière's understanding of political art and aesthetics resonates interestingly with the tradition of "paper architecture", which aims not for political realization but instead on the creation of dissensus through utopian speculation never even meant to be built. Regarding this, Ostwald suggests that "Rancière's methods provide a range of mechanisms that are significant for the framing (interpretation or critical positioning) of architecture in a world where political systems are neither stable nor founded on traditional ideologies" (Ostwald, 2007, p. 8).

Understood from this perspective, architecture can also produce spatial disagreements that reconfigure the divisions of common spaces and the power relations embedded in them. In this regard, architecture is not only about what is being realized but also different experiments taking primarily an exhibition

form, in which alternative political proposals can be elaborated.[73] As such, there exists a connection between architecture and politics in Rancière's thought, but it is highly contingent and its outcomes cannot be clearly calculated in advance. It is thus not limited to commitment to external politics.[74] Instead, here we return to the historical notion of aesthetics, politics, and their intertwinement emerging from the aesthetic regime of art:

> Aesthetics means that you don't exactly know what will be the effect of what you are doing. This is the core of the Kantian distinction: the form that is perceived is not the same as the form that is planned. So, architecture has always been at the same time about making buildings and planning towns, but also about conceiving utopias and making drawings that are just drawings and narratives about space (…) This means that architecture in modern times has taken up the idea of being not only a knowledge destined to building, but also an instrument for the reform of perception. Architecture is not only supposed to construct units for inhabiting, but really constructing new senses of seeing, working, acting, and feeling. (Rancière, 2019, pp. 17–18.)

What makes architecture "political" is therefore integrally linked to the broader notion of aesthetic experience as elaborated by Kant and Schiller, among others, beyond direct political engagement and grand utopian expectations:

> I thus highlighted the Schillerian moment, which is also the moment of the French Revolution. At this moment the destiny of art saw itself tied to the idea of an aesthetic community, of a sensible community founded on the transformation of the very mode of perceiving, which defined itself separately from the political revolution, which is to say from the idea of a transformation of community life operated by the State, by the transformation of institutions and laws. And then there is also the great moment of effervescence which was the first twenty or thirty years of the twentieth century, the

[73] In Rancière's discussion with Gage mentioned earlier, Rancière mentions especially the US Pavillion *Architectural Imagination* presented at the 2016 Venice Biennale (Rancière, 2019, pp. 15–16). Curated by Monica Ponce de Leon and Cynthia Davidson, *Architectural Imagination* investigated the speculative proposals of the future life of Detroit urban space that would emerge from its contemporary decay. As Rancière suggests, rather than providing a direct manual for revitalizing Detroit from its industrial and urban decay, more interesting is its conceptual approach regarding the notion of porosity in architecture. Porosity, as Rancière notes, is one of the most prolific political concepts utilized in this attempt to expand political imagination through architecture. Rather than aiming to "do solid things and block the space," porosity attempts to "make the space more mobile" (Rancière, 2019, p. 15).

[74] Here I am aware that while the argument is tempting and at least theoretically satisfying, it also largely repeats the problem that has been associated with "critical architecture" historically, which thinks of the actual conditions of critical architecture first and foremost philosophically, beyond the commitment to politics (Hays, 1984). As already mentioned, here architecture remains autonomous, isolated from daily politics. If the critical potential of architecture is to be found only from itself, from its form, then architectural practices can remain silent about structural questions concerning class, race, and gender and continue to exist in architectural magazines, theory, and exhibitions by proposing radical forms for extremely limited and privileged audiences. And what about, for example, the problems related to environmental crisis – does not the situation precisely suggest that architecture needs to engage directly with the world through ecological reconstruction? It is not perhaps coincidental that precisely similar elitist connotations concerning Rancière's rejection of more committed forms of political art have been constantly raised as well (Day, 2009). Peter Hallward, for instance, has noted how Rancière's emphasis on aesthetics over direct political engagement encourages us to do little more than play with different meanings between art and politics rather than contribute to existing social and political struggle (Hallward, 2009).

> moment when there really were programs for the union of art and a new way of life. This new life is not necessarily only that of the revolution, it can also be the way that architects and designers, from the time of the Werkbund and Bauhaus, conceived of an artistic practice that was connected to the transformation of daily life—objects, home décor, habitat… (Rancière, 2017b, 264)

As the ambiguous notion of aesthetics suggests, the expected political efficacy of art is a far is more complex phenomenon and cannot be directly put into the service of politics. In a similar way, political architecture is not only "destined to building" but the politics related to it can be also understood as a micropolitical spatial struggle over the existing distribution of the sensible.

4.4 Bringing the threads together: Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Rancière

In the previous sections I have attempted to introduce and examine the twofold argument of this study: that politics can be understood as a spatial (re)configuration of the ways in which our experience of the world is organized and that it is precisely architecture and the built environment that provide a privileged medium for understanding and elaborating such politics. This has been done by discussing the political thought of Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre, and Jacques Rancière.

The study suggests that when it comes to a spatial configuration of politics, there is, regardless of certain differences, a parallel between these thinkers.

To begin with the connection between Benjamin and Lefebvre, there is a similar attempt to push a Marxist critique of political economy towards everyday life and the built environment. Perhaps no other political philosophers are historically so closely associated with architecture and the conditions of habitation as political questions as Benjamin and Lefebvre (Roberts, 2006, p. 47). For Benjamin and Lefebvre, politics is integrally about the use of urban space, the configuration of the conditions of everyday life, and the production of power structures operating through architecture and urban planning.[75]

Both Benjamin and Lefebvre approach the constitution of space, architecture, everyday life, and the built environment from a dialectical perspective that involves both the maintenance of the existing social relations and their integral contestation and reconfiguration (Goonewardena, 2008, p. 122). As such, there are two different yet interlinked ways of understanding architecture's political function and its relationship to existing society: it can both reproduce and contest the existing social relations and dominant forms of power.

[75] It is striking, however, that Lefebvre never (at least systematically) cites Benjamin. There is a strong theoretical connection between them but also some biographical crossover, as they were both in the same Marxist circles in Paris in the beginning of the 1930s (for further biographical connections between Benjamin and Lefebvre, see Shields, 1999, pp. 24–26).

For Benjamin, the transformation of architecture is a pivotal way for understanding the reorganization of capitalist modes of production. Historically, this was evident, for example, in the Haussmannization of Paris, which turned the urban space itself into a form of commodity (Andreotti & Lahiji, 2016). Lefebvre also acknowledges architecture's pivotal role in reorganizing the conditions of production, especially after WWII when, according to Lefebvre, "the state" took an active role in shaping the economy via architectural and urban planning.

However, what distinguishes Benjamin and Lefebvre from broader Marxist thought is their proposal that while architecture cannot be considered to be isolated from the society, it nevertheless is not a mere reflection of the economy or subordinated to it (as, for example, Adorno and Tafuri assumed). Instead, political change is possible only through this development of new productive forces and social relations that unfold in a new conceptualization of space and everyday life. Here one can agree with Kanishka Goonewardena:

> Benjamin and Lefebvre share not only an interest in everyday life, then, but also a dialectical standpoint on even its most alienated manifestations. And neither, contrary to widespread opinion, offers a critique of modernity that may be termed "nostalgic." Benjamin's betrays rather a profoundly utopian—redemptive—sensibility that enthusiastically greets the new techno-culture ushered in by modernity, the "new nature"; though not the capitalist social relations with which it is gratuitously entangled. But he does not stop at making the vital distinction between the two—productive forces and production relations—within the "base" of the emergent social totality. (…) "Let everyday life become a work of art! Let every technical means be employed for the transformation of everyday life!" These are Lefebvre's words, uttered in unison with Benjamin's. (Goonewardena, 2008, p. 122)

What then is the relationship between Lefebvre and Rancière? While it might appear in the context of this study that there is a more systematic connection between Lefebvre and Rancière, as they both think of politics in spatial terms, there in fact exists relatively little study on their connection (for some tentative comparisons, see Lennon & Moore, 2018; Büscher-Ulbrich, 2020). Nor does Rancière, to my knowledge, comment on Lefebvre's work (or vice versa), even if their works not only share common themes but also some theoretical affinities.[76]

Regarding the focus of this study, what seems to constitute their common ground is their way of theorizing space (and ultimately architecture as well) in relation to politics. In this regard, Rancière's distribution of the sensible and its pivotal spatial dimension bears a resemblance to Lefebvre's production of social relations through space. Politics, understood in this way, is not only action that happens in neutral mediating space.

Such a definition of politics can be simultaneously approached from Rancière's Kantian examination of what is considered common sense or from

[76] For example, a common theme is their criticism of Althusserian Marxism. On the other hand, there exist a lot of differences as well. When it comes to their understanding of everyday life and space, Rancière mainly follows Kantian philosophy whereas Lefebvre's political thought is primarily linked to Marxism, which has a problematic position in Rancière's work.

Lefebvre's (and Benjamin's) Marxist analysis of seemingly neutral social relations that define what is considered possible in a given societal conjuncture. More particularly, politics is linked to an emancipatory perspective. Following Rancière, politics is about a contestation of prevailing spatial distributions of what is considered common sense. In a similar way, Lefebvre suggests that the attempt to think of prevailing social relations and dominant forms of hegemony as seemingly neutral is always integrally linked to organization of space, architecture, and the built environment.

In this regard, space, architecture, and the built environment for both Lefebvre and Rancière are linked to the broader process of spatial disagreement, in which the sensorial constitution of society – regarding whom space ultimately belongs to – is constantly reconfigured and contested by means of disagreeing architectural practices. By experimenting with different spatial modalities and disagreeing practices, architecture provides a type of laboratory for the renewal of the sensorial framework regarding the ways in which we perceive the space between us. The disagreement over the production of space, architecture, and the built environment is central to our understanding of democratic political processes.[77]

Finally, perhaps the most controversial aspect of the theoretical framework of this thesis is an attempt to link Benjamin and Rancière together. As is well established, Rancière has often criticized Benjamin's analysis of mass-reproducible art and its political undercurrents (see, for example, Rancière, 2013b, p. 31). The problem, in short, is that for Rancière Benjamin's enthusiasm for social change somewhat inherently present in new artistic technologies ultimately assumes that there is a causal transformation of the existing social relations present in the new artistic technologies (Shaw, 2016, p. 114). Rancière deliberately distinguishes himself from Benjamin's notion of mass-reproducible artistic technologies by approaching it from an opposite perspective. Historically, for example, modern architecture not only produces an artistic platform for mass politics but they are also part of a broader aesthetic and political experience inherent in the aesthetic regime of art.

However, Benjamin promotes a far more complex relationship between the progressive development of artistic technologies and their political tendencies or capability to contribute politically than what Rancière seems to assume. As was argued earlier (especially in 4.1.3), for Benjamin new artistic technologies are not in themselves inherently emancipatory. Instead, and very similarly to Rancière, the political tendencies of mass-reproducible art is closely related to a broader sensorial reorganization of the world and political experience.

Here, Benjamin's understanding of aesthetics is not far from Rancière's understanding of aesthetics as political force of its own; there is always an aesthetic dimension inherent in politics for both Benjamin and Rancière. According to David Cunningham, this is especially evident if we consider the

[77] One concrete example of this can be found in the architectural practice of Gabu Heindl, who has utilized both Rancière's conceptualization of disagreement and Lefebvre's right to the city in her architectural work (Heindl, 2017).

status of architecture in both Benjamin's and Rancière's work. For both, architecture is a form of art that cannot be understood without the coexistence of autonomous and heteronomous dimensions of artistic practices. The development of new autonomous forms of architecture is necessarily linked to a broader reconfiguration of collective life for both Benjamin and Rancière (Cunningham, 2014, pp. 36–38).

New artistic or architectural forms will not necessarily lead to new political configuration. Nor will new political ideology automatically produce alternative architectural forms. Instead, what is important for these thinkers is that the relationship between architecture and politics is more complex and "no direct cause-effect relationship is determinable between the intention realized in an art performance and a capacity for political subjectivation" (Rancière, 2015, pp. 149–150).

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The political dimension of architecture has become one of the most defining aspects of contemporary architectural discourse. The aim to think of the politics of the built environment and architecture emerges from actuality: from real estate capitalism, housing crises, gentrification, evictions, and the displacement of communities and social spaces to the world politics of walls, borders, and camps to the planetary environmental crisis and contaminated pandemic territories, political questions are increasingly modifications and a controlling of spaces and spatial infrastructures, and also means of presenting spatial alternatives. Especially in the age of climate disaster, the ways we want to live and dwell and use cities are all political questions related to the modification of urban space and architecture (Easterling, 2020).

The research started with a hypothesis that even if architecture is (especially at the moment) a highly politicized field, the different conceptualizations and theorizations of politics has to be further theorized. Analysis of architecture, design, and urban planning grants us access to some of the most urgent political themes, debates, and conflicts, but what is required is a new multidisciplinary theoretical framework to understand such politics. In this study, it is suggested that the common ground between architecture and politics needs to be examined from the point of view of the configuration and contestation of the space that both politics and architecture produce. As the study has attempted to theorize further, architectural space not only neutrally represents and transmits political ideologies and social relations ultimately external to architecture. Instead, the existing social relations are also constantly configured through space, architecture, and the built environment.

To elaborate these themes further, the research has introduced a new theoretical framework for this by discussing especially "the spatial configuration of politics" and its implications for architecture in the political thought of Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre, and Jacques Rancière. Through these thinkers and their conceptualization of politics, the study has examined three interlinked questions:

1. What is the relationship between space, architecture, and politics in the political thought of Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Rancière?
2. How does architecture as an articulation and production of space shape the conceptualization of politics?
3. If space, the built environment, and architecture are saturated with dominant forms of power and existing social relations, can alternative political agencies and counter-hegemonic strategies still be found in the production of space and architecture?

These questions are addressed in different ways in research articles – with their different research contexts, motivations, and publication history – regarding the ways in which architecture and politics might overlap in different practices, conjunctures, and historical contexts. First, by discussing Walter Benjamin's political thought and the role of architecture in it, the study has attempted to articulate a more complex relationship between aesthetic form and what Benjamin calls its "political tendencies". For Benjamin, architecture – like mass-reproducible arts in general – cannot be considered outside the existing and intensifying reification process of modernization.

However, inspired by various European avant-garde movements, Benjamin also puts forth a more complex argument: the emergence of new artistic technologies and forms not only reflects the existing social relations and dominant modes of production. Instead, Benjamin seeks to find a new progressive and emancipatory conceptualization of politics embedded in new artistic modes of production, technologies, and new artistic forms, which respond to the emerging experience of modernity informed by the social context in the aftermath of WWI (including the emergence of political movements such as communism and fascism).

To fully understand such politics in Benjamin's thought, it is important to acknowledge Benjamin's influences from the contemporaneous avant-garde, especially in his writings from the 1930s. This is also the era when Benjamin most systematically addresses the political function of architecture and how new architectural forms are related to a reconfiguration of existing social relations. New architectural forms emerging after WWI respond to the crisis and destruction of traditional subjectivity, elucidating new insights into the rapid change of the living environment and social relations beyond classical bourgeois conceptualizations of the world and perceptions of urban space mediated by the classical cultural canon.

Second, an ambivalent position defines Henri Lefebvre's notions of architecture as well. The study shows that Lefebvre identifies similar theoretical shortcomings of thinking of architecture's political agency as Tafuri, that is, being historically linked especially to the modernist utopian architectural "plan". However, what the study finds is that Lefebvre nevertheless defends an alternative formulation of architectural politics that approaches architecture from the point of view of internal struggle and production of hegemony; for Lefebvre,

this refers primarily to the way in which we consider the configuration of space as the true locus of politics.

While Lefebvre, similarly to Tafuri, strongly rejects the reformist tendencies of an architectural planning of society, the attempt to create a new space to configure new social relations through architecture remains a constant possibility and challenge in his political thought. What the study has suggested is that Lefebvre's conceptualization of such architectural politics, similarly to Benjamin's, can be taken to further argue how the reconfiguration of space through architecture (revolution in architectural forms, etc.) is crucial for understanding and theorizing political change more broadly.

Third, the study has suggested that similarly to Benjamin and Lefebvre, there are two different architectural strategies implicit in Rancière's thought. This distinction resonates with Rancière's better-known distinctions, such as police and politics, distribution and redistribution of the sensible, and meta- and micropolitics. Historically, both positions are linked to a paradoxical relationship between art and politics in the model that Rancière calls the aesthetic regime of art.

The aesthetic regime, according to Rancière, aids us in comprehending how each political shift necessitates a new aesthetic conceptualization of space, new methods of thinking about the world, and new experiential and experimental ways of responding to it. What I take to be especially relevant in Rancière's contribution to the theoretical framework of this study is how the question also has an integrally aesthetic dimension, as it deals with various political imaginaries: the politics produced through building is always a political struggle over the aesthetics integrally linked to political values.

Through this theoretical framework, the research has aimed to provide one plausible way to overcome the inherent paradoxical agency of architecture and its relationship to external and dominant social relations, which, for example, in the well-known Tafurian framework leaves little room for architecture's inherent political conditions. While architecture functions as a pivotal ideological tool for maintaining the dominant social relations and forms of power, it is also a medium for their integral contestation. Alongside reinforcing established forms of power, architecture can also provide experiments for alternative ways of configuring collective existence and modes of political experience.

What the study wishes to propose with the idea of spatial configuration and reconfiguration of politics and its relevance for architecture is that one cannot reduce the relationship between architecture and politics to any clear-cut division that either defends fundamental interdependency (form follows power) or defends architecture as an essentially neutral artistic practice (pure architecture) that needs to be evaluated on its own autonomous terms. Architecture is not political in any clear-cut way. It is not a mere subordination of power and existing social relations. Nor is it inherently emancipatory. Instead, as this study has attempted to show, rather than thinking of architecture from the point of view of the external framework of political architecture, it is more fruitful to consider architecture as a medium that organizes the social, political, and cultural space

of what is considered possible. In this regard, the political dimension of architecture ought to be framed as a contingent phenomenon, like the configuration of politics itself.

Here we arrive at the conclusion of this study: by putting the focus on architecture, urban space, and the built environment, the understanding of politics itself can be expanded. If politics is understood broadly as a struggle over the shared aesthetic constitution of society, it is necessary to understand the place in which this occurs and is produced: space, architecture, and urban planning. While today such an idea is increasingly a problem of digital spaces rather than only physical space, the spatial configuration of politics remains to be further analysed from both empirical and theoretical perspectives. In order to change politics, the space that mediates it needs to be changed.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Tämä väitöstutkimus käsittelee politiikan tilallista rakentumista tutkimusasetelmalla, jossa arkkitehtuuria lähestytään poliittisen teorian kautta. Tutkimuksen konteksti on politiikan tutkimus, erityisesti poliittinen teoria. Tutkimuksen lähtökohtana ei ole poliittinen arkkitehtuuri yksittäisten rakennusten kautta, vaan pikemminkin se, miten arkkitehtuurin kautta voidaan ymmärtää ja teoretisoida politiikkaa käsitteellisesti. Kyseessä ei siten ole menetelmällisesti ole arkkitehtuuria taiteenalana käsittelevä tutkimus vaan ennen kaikkea arkkitehtuurin erilaisia politiikkakäsityksiä ja teoreettisia lähtökohtia yhteiskuntateorian menetelmin ja käsittein analysoiva tutkimus.

Arkkitehtuurin poliittinen merkitys on korostunut viime vuosien aikana. Toistuvat asuntokriisit, ekologiset kriisit sekä tuoreimpana koronapandemian aiheuttamat haasteet kaupunkien ja jaetun tilan organisoimisessa ovat osoittaneet, miten ajankohtaiset poliittiset kysymykset liittyvät kasvavissa määrin kaupunkitilaan, rakennettuun ympäristöön sekä materiaalisten infrastruktuurien suunnitteluun sekä yhteiskunnallisiin valtasuhteisiin, joita ylläpidetään korostetusti arkkitehtuurin ja kaupunkisuunnittelun kautta. Myös lukuisien näyttelyiden, kirjajulkaisuiden, koulutusohjelmien ja suunnittelukollektiivien perustamisen myötä arkkitehtuuria on määritelty korostetusti sosiaalisesti sitoutuneena toimintana, jonka tulee käsitellä poliittisia kysymyksiä sekä edesauttaa kulttuurisesti, yhteiskunnallisesti sekä ekologisesti kestävämpien elämäntapojen toteuttamista suunnittelun keinoin.

Keskustelua arkkitehtuurin ja politiikan suhteesta leimaa kuitenkin usein eräänlainen instrumentaalinen selitystapa, jonka kautta arkkitehtuurin poliittisuus määritellään sen itsensä ulkopuolelta. Arkkitehtuuri nähdään usein kapeasti välineenä, joka vastaa ulkoisiin poliittisiin tavoitteisiin toteuttamalla tiettyjä arvoja suunnittelun kautta.

Väitöskirjan lähtökohtana on tähän liittyen erityisesti arkkitehtuurin poliittisuuden hankala asema osana poliittisen teorian perinnettä. Tätä ilmentää erityisesti kysymys siitä, onko arkkitehtuurin poliittisuutta mahdollista ajatella muuna kuin ulkoisten poliittisten voimien ja yhteiskunnallisten suhteiden representaationa, joissa 'muoto seuraa valtaa'.

Erityisesti arkkitehtuuriteoreetikko Manfredo Tafurin edelleen vaikutusvaltaisessa tulkinnassa arkkitehtuurin poliittisuus on yhtä aikaa paradoksaalisesti hyvin ilmeistä mutta perustavammalla tasolla toisaalta mahdotonta. Tafuri osoittaa, miten erityisesti modernismista alkaen arkkitehtuuria on systemaattisesti hyödynnetty osana yhteiskunnallisia reformeja ja poliittisia uudistuksia, mutta toisaalta "arkkitehtuuri politiikkana" siis esimerkiksi taloudesta ja vallitsevista yhteiskunnallisista suhteista vapaana autonomisena toimintana on mahdotonta. Tutkimus argumentoi, että vaikka Tafuria ei itsesään vielä voida sisällyttää 1900-luvun poliittisen teorian kaanoniin, tällainen käsitys arkkitehtuurin paradoksaalisesta poliittisuudesta on kuitenkin, ainakin implisiittisesti, sisältynyt hegemonisesti kriittiseen yhteiskuntafilosofiseen ja teoreettiseen keskusteluun arkkitehtuurin yhteiskunnallisesta asemasta. Yhtenä keskeisenä viittauspis-

teenä voi mainita esimerkiksi Theodor W. Adornon tulkinnan arkkitehtuurista ja sen vaikutuksen taiteen kriittistä yhteiskunnallista asemaa tutkineelle kriittiselle teorialle. Adornolle ja muille kriittisen teorian edustajille taiteen poliittinen vaikuttavuus on sen yhteiskunnallisessa negaatiossa ja omassa autonomiassaan siinä missä arkkitehtuurin liittyvä utooppisuus on pikemminkin reformistista ja ulkoisten yhteiskunnallisten suhteiden kautta määrittyvää.

Samalla tavalla myös politiikan tutkimuksen empiirisissä ja historiallisissa painotuksissa käsitys ”poliittisesta arkkitehtuurista” kulminoituu usein siihen, miten arkkitehtuuri toteuttaa erilaisten poliittisten ideologioiden tavoitteita ja tuo yhteiskunnan valtavirtaisia ideologioita näkyväksi korostuneesti politisoituneiden rakennusten keinoin. Poliittisella arkkitehtuurilla viitataan tutkimuksessa arkkitehtuurille ulkoisten poliittisten ideologioiden ja yhteiskunnallisten suhteiden representaatioon arkkitehtuurin kautta. Tällaisen suuntauksen vähintäänkin implisiittisenä olettamuksena on, että vaikka arkkitehtuurilla voi olla korostunut poliittinen rooli esimerkiksi osana vallan symbolista ilmenemistä julkisessa tilassa, ovat arkkitehtuuri ja politiikka pohjimmiltaan toisistaan erillisiä alueita.

Tutkimus kyseenalaistaa tällaisen suorasukaisen tulkinnan poliittisesta arkkitehtuurista valtavirtaisena tapana käsitteellistää arkkitehtuurin poliittisuus erityisesti politiikan tutkimuksessa sekä poliittisessa teoriassa. Tutkimus kokonaisuudessaan ja tutkimusartikkelit omien kysymyksenasetteluiden kautta argumentoivat, että poliittisen arkkitehtuurin käsitys politiikasta on liian yksiulotteinen. Tutkimus esittää vaihtoehtoisen tavan tulkita arkkitehtuurin poliittisuus käsittelemällä arkkitehtuuria politiikan tilallisena konfiguraationa. Tästä lähtökohdasta arkkitehtuuri näyttäytyy prosessina, jossa erilaiset poliittiset ideologiat, subjektiviteetit ja kompositiot myös tuotetaan sekä määrittyvät jatkuvasti uudelleen.

Väitöstutkimuksen fokus ei ole siten ainoastaan arkkitehtuuriin liittyvissä konkreettisissa poliittisissa käytännöissä (esimerkiksi yksittäisten monumentaalisten ”poliittisten” rakennusten analysoimisessa), vaan ennen kaikkea laajempien poliittisten merkitysten työstämisessä arkkitehtuurin kautta. Näkökulman mukaisesti arkkitehtuuri ei ole ainoastaan väline toteuttaa poliittisia tavoitteita vaan se on itsessään poliittinen medium, jonka kautta erilaisia poliittisia merkityksiä ja konflikteja myös tuotetaan. Tätä kautta tutkimus pyrkii ymmärtämään arkkitehtuuria poliittisena prosessina ja yhteiskunnallisten suhteiden kokonaisuutena, joka jäsentää itsessään sitä mitä on ’politiikka’ ja ’poliittinen’. Tämän pohjalta tutkimus esittää, että tutkittava tarkemmin käsitystä arkkitehtuurin liittyvästä ’politiikasta’. Se ei ole ainoastaan sosiaalisesti ja poliittisesti ”sitoutunutta”, siis olemassa olevien (ulkoisten) poliittisten tavoitteiden ajamista tai vastustamista. Pikemminkin se on tilallisesti rakentuvaa kiistaa siitä, mikä ylipäätään tulee politiikan piiriin: jaetuksi, näkyväksi ja kiisteltäväksi.

Tutkimushypoteesina on, että arkkitehtuurin poliittiset tulkintatavat etenkin politiikan tutkimuksen alueella jättävät usein tämän jälkimmäisen käsityksen vähemmälle huomiolle. Tutkimuksessa esitetään, että kuitenkin juuri sen kautta pystytään ottamaan huomioon politiikalle keskeinen imaginaarinen, tilallinen ja

esteettinen taso, jossa kyse ei ole pelkästään ulkoisten poliittisten tavoitteiden ja ideologioiden toteuttamisesta vaan itsessään uudenlaisten poliittisten kysymysten ja yhteiskunnallisten suhteiden hahmottamisesta tilan ja rakennetun ympäristön kautta.

Uudenlaisten tilallisten konstituutioiden muodostaminen on poliittisen toiminnan ytimessä, ei sille ulkoista tai alisteista. Esimerkiksi suomalaiseen modernismiin olennaisesti liittyvä ajatus ”hyvinvointivaltion arkkitehtuurista” ymmärretään usein siten, että demokraattinen arkkitehtuuri ja ”arkipäivän estetiikka” vastasivat hyvinvointivaltiollisen sosiaalipolitiikan ideologian tarpeisiin. Kuitenkin juuri päiväkoti-, koulu- ja kirjastorakennukset, uimahallit rakennuksina sekä aluepoliittinen kaavoitus olivat itsessään huomattavasti aktiivisemmassa roolissa hyvinvointivaltion ajatuksen käsitteellisessä tuottamisessa. Käsityksemme ”hyvinvointivaltion ideasta” ei tule siten ainoastaan teoreettisesta sosiaalipoliittisesta mallista vaan se on muun muassa rakennettu niiden kokemusten ja tapojen kautta, jotka ovat välittyneet tavastamme käsitteellistää ja käyttää tälle aikakaudelle leimallisia rakennuksia ja niille annettuja merkityksiä sekä suunnittelijoiden että käyttäjien toimesta.

Myös nykyperspektiivistä tulisi tutkimuksen mukaan huomioida paremmin, että esimerkiksi feministinen tai antirasistinen arkkitehtuuri ei palaudu ainoastaan näiden ideologioiden huomioimiseen suunnittelutyössä. Kyseessä on myös näiden poliittisten tavoitteiden aktiivisesta tuottamisesta arkkitehtuurin kautta. Siten kyseessä on ennen kaikkea politiikka arkkitehtuurin läpi, joka ei ole yksiselitteisesti alisteinen ulkoisille ideologisille odotuksille ja arkkitehtuurille annetuille sosiaalisille ja poliittisille tavoitteille. Pikemminkin se on samanaikaisesti näiden ideologioiden tuottamista, tulkintaa ja kriittistä uudelleen määrittelemää.

Tutkimus (1) teoretisoi ja käsitteellistää tällaista tulkintatapaa poliittisen teorian näkökulmasta, (2) osoittaa sen historialliset viitekehykset utooppisen ja sosiaalisesti sitoutuneen arkkitehtuurin perinteessä sekä (3) tutkii tämän käsitteellistämistavan merkityksiä suhteessa arkkitehtuuriin, kaupunkisuunnitteluun sekä julkisen tilan jakamiseen ja käyttöön liittyviin poliittisiin konflikteihin.

Tutkimuksen teoreettisen lähestymistavan muodostaa etenkin Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre sekä Jacques Rancière, jotka pyrkivät ajattelussaan käsitteellistämään politiikan tilallista muodostumista. Tämän lisäksi he ovat niitä harvalukuisia poliittisia ajattelijoita, jotka ovat systemaattisesti yrittäneet kohdata arkkitehtuuriin liittyviä kysymyksiä poliittisen teorian ja filosofian näkökulmasta. Ajattelijoita yhdistää myös käsitys siitä, että poliittinen muutos vaatii aina laajemman tilallisen murroksen. Tila, artikuloituna tässä tutkimuksessa ennen kaikkea arkkitehtuurin kautta, ei ole ainoastaan muuttumaton alusta, jossa poliittinen toiminta tapahtuu vaan poliittinen murros muuttaa myös tätä tilaa itsessään. Benjaminin, Lefebvren sekä Rancièren poliittisen ajattelun pohjalta tavoitteena on tutkia hypoteesia, jonka mukaan arkkitehtuuri on jatkuva prosessi, jossa käsitys politiikasta muodostuu yhteiskunnan eri osa-alueiden, toimijoiden ja käytäntöjen välillä.

Tutkimuksella on kolme pääkysymystä:

1. Mikä on tilan, arkkitehtuurin ja politiikan suhde Walter Benjaminin, Henri Lefebvren sekä Jacques Rancièren poliittisessa ajattelussa?
2. Miten arkkitehtuuri tilan tuottamisena määrittää käsitystä siitä, mitä on politiikka?
3. Jos tila, rakennettu ympäristö sekä arkkitehtuuri ovat pohjimmiltaan hegemonisten valtasuhteiden määrittämiä, voiko arkkitehtuurin ja laajemmin tilan tuottamisen ajatella pitävän sisällään myös vaihtoehtoisia poliittisia toimijuuksia sekä vallitsevia yhteiskunnallisia suhteita kyseenalaistavia strategioita?

Väitöskirja koostuu neljästä tutkimusartikkelista, jotka keskittyvät tarkemmin Benjaminin, Lefebvren ja Rancièren ajattelun relevanssiin arkkitehtuurin poliittisuuteen liittyvissä kysymyksissä ja keskusteluissa.

Keskittymällä Walter Benjaminin poliittiseen ajatteluun, tutkimus pyrkii teoretisoimaan arkkitehtonisen muodon ja sen välittämien "poliittisten tendenssien" suhdetta. Benjamin yrittää käsitteellistää sellaisen taiteelliseen muotoon liittyvän politiikan, joka ei perustuisi ajatukseen taiteesta poliittisten teemojen välittäjänä. Sen sijaan Benjaminin mukaan taiteen politiikka tapahtuu ennen kaikkea taiteellisen muodon kautta sen artikuloidessa uutta aistimellista tapaa havainnoida ja kokea maailmaa uudelleen. Taiteen poliittisuuden ytimessä on Benjaminille kysymys siitä, miten se onnistuu muuttamaan yhteiskunnallisia suhteita: siten kysymykset taiteen muodosta, sen tekniikasta ja materiaalisesta uusintamisesta ovat lähtökohtaisesti poliittisia kysymyksiä.

Tätä käsitellään tutkimuksessa erityisesti 1900-luvun alun avantgardistisen arkkitehtuurin näkökulmasta painottamalla sen yhteyttä laajempaan aikakauden poliittiseen konjunktuuriin. Tutkimus osoittaa, miten arkkitehtonisen muodon, tuotannon ja rakennusmateriaalien uudistamisella on Benjaminin ajattelussa keskeinen yhteys yhteiskunnallisten suhteiden uusintamiseen myös laajemmin. Siten Benjaminin tulkinta arkkitehtuurin ja politiikan suhteesta on huomattavasti moniselitteisempi kuin esimerkiksi muilla Frankfurtin koulukunnan kriittiseen teoriaan yhdistetyillä ajattelijoilla: arkkitehtonisen muodon sekä tekniikan uudistamisella voi olla itsessään poliittinen muutospotentiaali, ei ainoastaan päinvastoin.

Tutkimus osoittaa samanlaisen monimutkaisen yhteyden arkkitehtuurin ja vallitsevien yhteiskuntasuhteiden välillä myös Henri Lefebvren ajattelussa. Lefebvren ajattelussa toistuu paikoin samankaltainen marxilainen perusvire kuin mikä voidaan paikantaa kaikista tunnetuimmin Manfredo Tafurin työhön: arkkitehtuurin asema vallitseviin yhteiskuntasuhteisiin rajoittaa sen utooppista kykyä asettaa todellisia poliittisia vaihtoehtoja.

Toisaalta tutkimus myös osoittaa, miten Lefebvre pyrkii myös jatkuvasti haastamaan tämän kysymyksenasettelun tavalla, jota esimerkiksi Fredric Jameson on kutsunut vastahegemoniseksi arkkitehtuuriksi. Tutkimus kehittää tätä eteenpäin painottamalla, että Lefebvre pyrkii omassa ajattelussaan välttämään arkkitehtuurin ajattelemisen marxilaiselle perinteelle ominaisen vallankumous-reformi-dikotomian. Sen sijaan Lefebvrelle arkkitehtoninen kokeilevuus on itses-

sään vallankumouksellista, ei ainoastaan sen mahdolliset poliittiset seuraukset. Lefebvrelle arkkitehtuuri ei siten ainoastaan heijastele vallitsevia yhteiskunnallisia suhteita vaan se on myös tapa tuottaa ja paikoin myös määritellä niitä kriittisesti uudelleen. Siten Lefebvrelle (arkkitehtoninen) tila ei ole ainoastaan politiikan neutraali tapahtumapaikka, vaan tuon tilan konfigurointi on itsessään yhteiskunnallisten suhteiden määrittämistä ja kyseenalaistamista. Lefebvrelle politiikka ei siten tapahdu ainoastaan arkkitehtuurin kautta vaan määrittyy aktiivisesti sen läpi.

Benjaminin ja Lefebvren ohella, tutkimus hyödyntää Jacques Rancièren poliittista ajattelua. Vaikka Rancièren ajattelussa arkkitehtuurilla ei ole yhtä keskeistä roolia kuin kahdella edellisellä, pyrkii tutkimus kuitenkin osoittamaan, että Rancièren teoreettis-historialliset huomautukset taiteen ja politiikan välisestä suhteesta (ja etenkin siitä, mitä niin sanottu ”poliittinen taide” ei ole) ovat hyödyllisiä. Sen sijaan, että taiteen poliittisuutta katsottaisiin suoran vastaavuussuhteen kautta, jossa taiteen tehtävänä olisi toimia alisteisena poliittisille ideologioille tai representoida sille ulkoisia yhteiskunnallisia suhteita, on Rancièren mukaan olennaista kiinnittää huomiota taiteen sisäiseen poliittisuuteen, estetiikan politiikkaan tapana katsoa ja uudistaa yhteiskunnan aistimellisia jakolinjoja.

Tämän lisäksi, ja tähän liittyen, tutkimus kiinnittää huomiota Rancièren systemaattiseen tapaan käsitteellistää politiikka tilallisuuden kautta: politiikka ei Rancièren mukaan ainoastaan tapahdu toimintana tilassa, vaan politiikassa on aina kyse sen perustavana olevan tilan määrittämisestä ja muotoutumisesta. Monet Rancièren peruskäsitteet tunnetuimillaan jaottelu ”poliisin” ja ”politiikan” välillä sekä aistimellisuuden jako (le partage du sensible) politiikan lähtökohtana perustuvatkin hyvin selkeään käsitykseen politiikasta tilan jakamisena, jaotteluna, hallitsemisena ja haltuunottona (occupation) sekä metaforisesti että konkreettisesti. Yksinkertaistaen sanottuna tila ei ole Rancièrelle ainoastaan politiikan väline vaan politiikan ydin. Vaikka Rancière ei systemaattisesti yhdistä tätä arkkitehtuuriin, tutkimus tuo esiin tähän liittyviä fragmentaarisia huomautuksia Rancièren tuotannossa ja pyrkii tätä kautta ymmärtämään Rancièren käsitteistön hyödyllisyyden myös arkkitehtuurin poliittiselle analyysille.

Tämän teoreettisen viitekehyksen kautta tutkimus pyrkii paikantamaan moniulotteisemman tulkinnan arkkitehtuuriin liittyvästä politiikasta kuin mikä sille Tafurin kaltaisissa kriittisissä jäsennyksissä ja toisaalta ”poliittisen arkkitehtuurin” representaatioihin perustuvissa jäsennyksissä annetaan.

Tutkimus hyödyntää metodologisesti visuaaliseen politiikantutkimukseen kuuluvia menetelmiä. Visuaalisen politiikan menetelmiä hyödyntämällä tutkimus pyrkii ymmärtämään taiteen, kulttuurin ja arkkitehtuurin aktiivisesti politiikkaa tuottavina ja määrittävinä alueina sen sijaan, että niitä ajateltaisiin ulkoisten poliittisten representaatioiden kautta. Tämä perustuu etenkin Michael J. Shapiron ja Roland Bleikerin kaltaisten teoreetikoiden tulkinnoille visuaalisesta politiikasta, joissa pelkän poliittisten käsitteiden ja teorioiden soveltamisen sijaan pyritään myös korostamaan, miten esteettisten objektien analyysin kautta voidaan kriittisesti haastaa normaalisti kyseenalaistamattomia olettamuksia politiikasta. Näkökulma siirtää fokuksen valmiista lopputuloksista, koherenteista ana-

lyyseistä itse poliittisuuden muotoutumiseen prosessina, jossa tutkimuskohde ja aineisto ei ole yksiselitteisesti alisteinen ulkoiselle ”teorialle”, jonka kautta sitä ”luetaan poliittisesti”.

Keskittymällä arkkitehtuurin yhteiskuntatieteellisiin painotuksiin, tutkimus uudistaa käsityksiä yhteiskuntatieteellisen tutkimuksen rajankäynnistä, arkkitehtuurin kanssa ja määrittää siten uudelleen arkkitehtuurin, tilan ja rakennetun ympäristön merkitystä politiikantutkimuksen ja poliittisen teorian kohteina. Painottamalla politiikan tilallista rakentumista (the spatial configuration and reconfiguration of politics) ja arkkitehtuuria tapana jäsentää sitä, tutkimuksen lopputulos on, että arkkitehtuuriin tai laajassa mielessä kaupunkitilaan ja rakennettuun ympäristöön liittyviä poliittisia kiistoja ei voi palauttaa suorasukaisiin ideologioiden tai vallitsevien yhteiskunnallisten suhteiden representaatioihin ja vallalle alisteisiksi siitäkin huolimatta, että arkkitehtuurin suhteen on mahdotonta monien muiden taiteen tavoin puhua kokonaisvaltaisesta taiteellisesta autonomiasta poliittisuuden yhtenä keskeisenä lähtökohtana tai edellytyksenä. Tämän sijaan on olennaista ajatella arkkitehtuuria kiinteänä osana erilaisia poliittisia prosesseja, jotka jäsentävät sosiaalisia, poliittisia ja kulttuurisia käsityksiä siitä, mitä yhteiskunnassa pidetään mahdollisena.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS

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MARXIST AND MODERNIST: WALTER BENJAMIN'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE ARCHITECTURAL AVANT-GARDE

by

Aleksi Lohtaja

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PII

HENRI LEFEBVRE'S LESSONS FROM THE BAUHAUS

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Aleksi Lohtaja, 2021

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Henri Lefebvre's lessons from the Bauhaus

Throughout his writings, Henri Lefebvre made sporadic observations on the German art, design, and architecture school Bauhaus. His commentary on the Bauhaus can be read in light of his wider criticism of Modernist architecture and its political project. Despite its revolutionary aspirations, the Bauhaus provided 'the architectural requirements of state capitalism'. This article argues that looking at Lefebvre's ambiguous reading of the Bauhaus unveils the more complex trajectory of his thinking on Modernist utopian impulses to change society through design. Alongside his criticism of the Bauhaus as tailor made for what Lefebvre calls the neocapitalist state, his work also includes more positive comments on the school. While Lefebvre rejects the reformist tendencies of the Bauhaus, he acknowledges that the school plays an important, historic role for advancing political change through architecture. As such, Lefebvre's criticism of the Bauhaus should be reconsidered in terms of offering a lesson in Modernism. Its attempt to create a new space to configure new social relations becomes an unfinished project; it is precisely the failure of Modernism to push this project beyond conformist and reformist agendas that needs to be considered. In conclusion, Lefebvre reads the utopian aspirations of the Bauhaus within and against their actual historical outcome.

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Introduction

'It is easy enough to establish the historic role of the Bauhaus, but not so easy to assess the breadth and limits of this role', claimed Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* of 1974.[1] Since its founding, the Bauhaus (1919–1933) has been regarded as one of the most important points of reference for architecture's potential to contribute to social and political change. We are of course familiar with the famous artworks, objects, and buildings of the Bauhaus. But perhaps even more famous was the school's utopian vision for the future that confronts inherent problems of the modern world and capitalism.[2] According to the founder of the Bauhaus Walter Gropius, 'young people flocked to us from home and abroad, not to design "correct" table lamps, but to participate in a community that wanted to create a new man in a new

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environment'.[3] Yet, such utopianism has naturally raised critical questions concerning the legacy of the Bauhaus and the gender bias, Eurocentrism masked as universalism, and technocratic belief in progress that come along with it. Such debates in turn spawned diverse understandings and interpretations of the Bauhaus. One of the longest-standing among these debates concerns the status of the Bauhaus in the capitalist mode of production of the twentieth century.[4]

This article discusses French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's (1901–1991) critical reading of the Bauhaus from the point of view of this tension.[5] Lefebvre is known for his forceful critique of Modern architecture and its political worldview.[6] What started as a utopian attempt to renew and modernise the housing condition of the working class through rationalisation and mass production resulted in the monotonous architectural reproduction of the relations of production on a global scale.[7] Taken together with other seminal Modern architects such as Le Corbusier, the Bauhaus plays the part of the antagonist in this reading:

> An ambiguity follows from what Le Corbusier and the members of the Bauhaus believed to constitute a revolution. We took them for Bolsheviks when actually they inaugurated capitalistic space. Their conception of space has spread alongside neocapitalism and especially with the triumphal rise of the State.[8]

Yet, I argue that Lefebvre's encounter with the Bauhaus, Modernism, and the architectural avant-garde in general (especially Russian Constructivism) is more complicated than what has so far been assumed.[9] It is indisputable that in Lefebvre's reading, Modern architecture failed to provide a sufficiently radical alternative to the crisis of capitalism after the First World War. But Lefebvre also suggests that there is a 'lesson to be learned' from Modernism: 'new social relations demand a new space, and vice-versa'.[10]

From this vantage, the lesson of Modernism — an attempt to create a new space to configure new social relations — becomes an unfinished project; it is precisely the historical failure of Modernism to radicalise and push this project beyond the prevailing capitalist society that Lefebvre takes as his own point of departure. While he rejects certain reformist tendencies of the Bauhaus that pushed to adapt to the state, architectural planning, and the capitalist mode of production in the 'neocapitalist state', he also acknowledges the ways in which the Bauhaus provides an important historical model for driving political change primarily through architecture.

My argument for a more comprehensive re-reading of the Bauhaus in Lefebvre's work is threefold. First, I discuss Lefebvre's critical Marxist argument about the ways in which, despite its original left-wing sympathies, the Bauhaus ended up providing spatial settings for the advancement of the capitalist modes of production of the twentieth century that Lefebvre calls 'neocapitalism'. I comparatively read this critique with that of another important Marxist architectural theorist, Manfredo Tafuri, who also explored the relationship of Modern architecture with Keynesian-Fordist capitalism. Second, I show how Lefebvre also provides a more positive reading of the Bauhaus, springing from the same Marxist predicates. To contextualise this alternative trajectory

of the Bauhaus in Lefebvre's work, I extend my analysis beyond his seminal writings.[11] Third, I examine how, despite his critique, Lefebvre frequently appropriates architectural concepts originally associated with Modernism for his own purposes. Perhaps the most famous example is his creative adoption of the 'social condenser' as a concept associated with Russian Constructivism.[12] In the case of the Bauhaus, a good example is Lefebvre's critical adoption of Gropius's concept of the 'architect as coordinator'. While rejecting this approach, Lefebvre elaborates on Gropius's original concept to outline what he himself calls the 'architect as social accelerator'. In conclusion, acknowledging this trajectory illuminates the more complex relationship between Lefebvre and the 'utopianism' of Modern architecture.

Tailor made for the neocapitalist state

Lefebvre's Bauhaus was a mix of images and proclamations from key protagonists and phases of the school with later images of the 'Bauhaus style' that proliferated with often diverging and contradictory meanings. As such, what Lefebvre associated with the Bauhaus may not be reducible to the original history of the school between 1919 and 1933.

The Bauhaus became an important point of reference for Lefebvre primarily after the 'Bauhaus: 50 Years' exhibition of 1968. Originally held in Stuttgart's Württembergischer Kunstverein, the exhibition moved to various European museums from 1968 to 1971. In the context of Cold War cultural politics, the exhibition advanced an apolitical and liberal reading of the Bauhaus and its later phases as a western style. As such, it omitted the earlier communist sympathies of the school, such as those of Hannes Meyer, the second director of the Bauhaus known for his committed Marxist worldview. Later scholarship has suggested that, while celebrating the liberal and democratic nature of the Bauhaus, the exhibition served its own ideological purpose.[13] It mobilised the Bauhaus legacy in the service of the challenging nation-building project of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). In this context, the school provided an empowering example of alternative histories of modern German culture beyond the traumatic Nazi past. From this vantage, the Bauhaus aimed to create a more open and democratic society; a project that remained unfinished as the Nazis came to power and ultimately closed the school in 1933.

But even if the exhibition managed to reconsider and readjust the history of the Bauhaus in a progressive way, it failed to take into account contemporary socio-political upheavals that ushered in a wider crisis of architectural Modernism and its social and political efficacy to change society by engaging with it.[14] Opening in Stuttgart just a few days after the 1968 student riots in Paris instigated German student movements, the Bauhaus exhibition represented an outdated and highly elitist architectural movement.[15] This 1968 critique of the Bauhaus was compatible with critiques of Modernism in emerging architectural movements of the time, including those of Archigram, Superstudio, Ant Farm, Utopie, Constant Nieuwenhuys and the Situationist International.[16] If

the Bauhaus was linked to democratic nation building, these movements that elaborated themes such as 'anti-statism, citizen participation, everyday life, temporality and ephemerality'[17] were in stark contrast with it and the social mission of Modernism.[18] From this vantage, the alleged 'utopianism' of Modern architecture appeared not as the radical rethinking of a new society, but more properly as 'pastoral modernism' that 'aimed at smoothing out differences and conflicts', as argued by Hilde Heynen.[19]

In this context, Lefebvre was similarly critical of the Bauhaus, challenging the wider connection of conformist social democracy, Modern architecture and economic progress. As such, the Bauhaus in Lefebvre's work did not refer to the original school, but primarily to its later representations.[20] Whether Lefebvre actually saw the 'Bauhaus: 50 Years' exhibition held in Paris in 1969 is unclear. But citing the catalogue of the exhibition, he maintained that the display promoted 'architecture's demiurgic role [which] is part of urban mythology and ideology'.[21] He later attributed this type of reading to 'the naivety of art historians'[22] that confused 'ideology [with] utopianism'.[23] Far from revolutionary, the Bauhaus appeared as 'tailor-made for the state'.[24]

From today's vantage of almost total privatisation and commodification of public institutions and national services, such as social housing, Lefebvre's dismissal of the link between the Bauhaus and the 'state' seems strange. However, his position reflected the broader theoretical debate around the reformist tendencies of Modern architecture of his time. The concept of reformism has its own long history of theoretical debates within the Marxist tradition, where it is especially associated with Eduard Bernstein's theory of the evolutionary path to socialism.[25] Contrary to a more profound revolution, reformism is a political strategy that aims to trigger social and political change through existing institutions by means of progressive adjustments accumulating in the long term.

Historically, reformism was often linked with the early twentieth-century social democratic movements that considered the emancipation of the working class to be ultimately compatible with a regulated capitalist economy and the juridical-political institutions of the nation-state. In terms of architectural Modernism, this type of social democratic reformism can be traced not only to the Bauhaus, but even more clearly to architectural projects such as Ernst May's *Das Neue Frankfurt*, or the institutionalisation of CIAM and its scientific and functional discourse on urbanism.[26] These were architectural movements that 'foregrounded the social responsibilities of design, and produced primarily mass social housing and planned cities', in Tahl Kaminer's words.[27]

For Lefebvre, architectural reformism presents no real alternative to capitalist development; on the contrary, it veils it. To cite just one example, the celebration of housing reform in the name of Modernism fails to grasp the integral transition of capitalism towards a new form of 'organised capitalism', what Lefebvre calls 'neocapitalism'.[28] This is not to be confounded with neoliberalism. Neocapitalism is a regime that departs from the laissez-faire capitalism

of classical economic theory to operate in a more complex nexus of regulated economy, nation-states and Modern architectural planning.

Neil Brenner has argued that the transition towards neocapitalism 'masked a profound transformation of state/economy relations, in which the state has become imbricated in ever more complex ways in producing, maintaining, and reproducing the basic socio-institutional and territorial pre-conditions for capital accumulation'.[29] In this context, capitalism survives not despite, but because of, new economic regulations and social policies. From this vantage, architecture and spatial planning plays a pivotal role in reorganising the conditions of production. Choosing the path of reformist improvements in living and housing conditions over a more radical rethinking of society, or 'avoiding revolution' as famously suggested by Le Corbusier, 'the architecture of the period turned out to be in the service of the state and hence a conformist and reformist force on a world scale'.[30] Based on this critique, Lefebvre's comments on Modern architecture range from Russian Constructivism to Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. But it is especially the Bauhaus that he associates with the emergence of a new conceptualisation of space for a new mode of production, what he famously calls 'the production of space':

> It might be asked at this juncture if there is any way of dating what might be called the moment of emergence of an awareness of space and its production: when and where, why and how, did a neglected knowledge and a misconstrued reality begin to be recognised? It so happens that this emergence can indeed be fixed: it is to be found in the 'historic' role of the Bauhaus.[31]

Here, Lefebvre's argumentation resembles that of Manfredo Tafuri who also went against dominant art historical readings of architecture to problematise the keen relationship of the Modernist avant-garde with capitalist modernisation. Tafuri reads the development of new ideas of architecture and design in a dialectical relationship with what he calls the 'capitalist development' of the twentieth century. He critically observes the constant crossovers between a Fordist–Keynesian mode of production and avant-gardist experimental culture, following 'the laws typical of industrial production: continuous technical revolution is their very essence'.[32]

Like Lefebvre, Tafuri argues that the early twentieth-century Modernist movements in architecture, which are often considered socialist or left-leaning, helped to realise a 'utopia serving the objectives of the reorganisation of production'.[33] Likewise, it is precisely in the historic role of the Bauhaus that this connection is most thoroughly elaborated:

> The Bauhaus as the decantation chamber of the avant-gardes, fulfilled this historic task: it selected from among all the contributions of the avant-gardes, testing them against the demands of the reality of industrial production. Design, as a method of organising production more than of configuring objects, did away with the utopian vestiges inherent in the poetics of the avant-gardes. Ideology was no longer superimposed on activity—which was now concrete because it was connected to real cycles of production—but was inherent in the activity itself.[34]

Both Lefebvre and Tafuri view the legacy of Modernist utopianism to be far from radical. Instead, they regard it as an integral part of capitalist development based on a strong relationship between the state, the market, architecture and planning. Hence, according to Lefebvre, 'when it comes to the question of what the Bauhaus audacity produced in the long run, one is obliged to answer: the worldwide, homogenous and monotonous architecture of the state, whether capitalist or socialist'.[35] As such, Lefebvre's critique of the Bauhaus should not be understood strictly as a political issue. Apart from the relatively understandable and straightforward critique of the elitism associated with Ludwig Mies van der Rohe,[36] Lefebvre, a former member of the French Communist Party himself, also criticises Hannes Meyer, the second leader of the Bauhaus known for his communist sympathies.[37] Associated with catch-phrases such as 'Volksbedarf statt Luxusbedarf' ['the people's needs instead of the need for luxury'], Meyer's ideas, alongside those of other proponents of cost-effective, standardised, and egalitarian housing solutions for the proletariat as a way to answer the housing question, are 'realised only in terms of the restrictive norms and constraints of the existing mode of production'.[38] As such, they do not offer a proper political alternative.

The Bauhaus within and beyond the production of space

Tafuri's and Lefebvre's discussions of the Bauhaus form part of the broader debate on the status and afterlife of Modernist utopianism. Is it possible to consider societal change and escape the dominant power relations through architecture? Or do such attempts become trapped, recuperated, and absorbed by the dominant mode of production? For Lefebvre, such questions were articulated in relation to the historic role of the Bauhaus specifically in the post-1968 conjuncture which challenged the wider political reformist attitude. But Lefebvre's and Tafuri's critique of the Bauhaus also encapsulates the broader spectrum of Modern architecture in critical Marxist thinking of the twentieth century.[39] It is a critique that echoes views of Marxist philosophers Theodor W. Adorno and Ernst Bloch, linked with Lefebvre's more ambiguous position.

Adorno argues that even the most revolutionary aspects of Modern architecture cannot escape the grip of prevailing social relations. Contrary to other forms of (high) art and their utopian potential to think of society differently, Modernism in architecture is 'conditioned by a social antagonism over which the greatest architecture has no power: the same society which developed human productive energies to unimaginable proportions has chained them to conditions of production imposed upon them'.[40] Bloch went even further, arguing that 'architecture cannot at all flourish in the late capitalist hollow space since it is, far more than the other fine arts, a social creation and remains that way'.[41] For Bloch, it was precisely the status of the Bauhaus in its post-1968 representation which demonstrated that 'when a lifestyle is as decadent as the late bourgeois one, then mere architectural reform can no longer be shrouded'.[42]

While Lefebvre certainly shares this pessimism for architecture's 'utopian function' to think of a radically different society, he also acknowledges the disintegrating role of architecture to challenge the existing mode of production from within.[43] As Fredric Jameson suggests in his comparative reading of Lefebvre and Tafuri, 'a certain alternate idea of space [exists] within the object of an analysis rather than outside of it'.[44] In this sense, Lefebvre interprets architecture not only as a reflection of capitalism, but also as a continuous site of struggle over different meanings, one which always contains opposite opinions: both prevailing ideological socio-political structures and latent utopian possibilities for differential spaces.[45]

In addition, for Lefebvre, it is precisely Modern architects who realise how 'space itself, at once a product of the capitalist mode of production and an economic-political instrument of the bourgeoisie, will now be seen to embody its own contradictions'.[46] Instead of treating social relations and their inherent contradictions as ahistorical, neutral, or static, Lefebvre emphasises how Modern architecture not only reproduces existing social relations, but also realises their contradictions in spatial form:

> In the context of the productive forces, the technological means and the specific problems of the modern world, things and objects could now be produced in their relationships, along with their relationships. Formerly, artistic ensembles—monuments, towns, furnishings—had been created by a variety of artists according to subjective criteria: the taste of princes, the intelligence of rich patrons or the genius of the artists themselves. Architects had thus built palaces designed to house specific objects ('furniture') associated with an aristocratic mode of life, and, alongside them, squares for the people and monuments for social institutions. The resulting whole might constitute a space with a particular style, often even a dazzling style but it was still a space never rationally defined which came into being and disappeared for no clear reason.[47]

Here, once again, Lefebvre appraises the Bauhaus for aiming to respond to these contradictions and surpass them:

> As he considered the past and viewed it in the light of the present, Gropius sensed that henceforward social practice was destined to change. […] This insight confirmed after its fashion an idea of Marx's, the idea that industry has the power to open before our eyes the book of the creative capacities of 'man' (i.e. of social being).[48]

From this vantage, Lefebvre traces the genealogy of capitalist development through the legacy of the Bauhaus and other Modernist movements in architecture. Furthermore, he is interested in their latent political tendencies that have 'the power to open before our eyes the book of the creative capacities' that lie ahead. While this trajectory is not exclusively linked with the Bauhaus, the school remains an example that Lefebvre frequently utilises when he aims to challenge the deterministic logic between architecture and the broader economic base structure.[49]

To cite just one related example, I will briefly discuss Lefebvre's participation to a lesser-known architectural conference titled 'The Universitas Project: Institutions for a Post-Technological Society'. Held in 1972 at the New York

Museum of Modern Art, the Universitas project was organised by Emilio Ambasz. It was an ambitious attempt to sketch the contours for an experimental university that would connect theoretical inquiries to future education in architecture, design, and environmental science.[50] Known for his collaborative approach to design and critical social theory, the list of participants invited by Ambasz included not only notable architects, design theorists, architects, and art historians such as Meyer Schapiro, György Kepes (who also taught at 'The New Bauhaus' at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago), Carl Schorske, and Christopher Alexander, but also philosophers and political theorists such as Lefebvre, Alain Touraine, Manuel Castells, Jean Baudrillard,[51] and Hannah Arendt. In Ambasz's words,

> The Universitas Project starts from the recognition that although human activity, more and more, shapes its milieu, the shape which is being taken by this man-made milieu has so far escaped our control; and what this project, therefore, questions is whether the prevailing modes of thought and the existing institutions that we have are capable of dealing with the problems of the man-made milieu.[52]

The attempt resonated strikingly with that of the Bauhaus. Even if the conference was not explicitly built on the legacy of the Bauhaus as a direct model for a new experimental university, there still was 'a shadow of the Bauhaus as an institution hovering around the Universitas project', as noted by Carl Schorske.[53] During the conference, Lefebvre reiterated his argument that the Bauhaus functioned as an important genealogical starting point for understanding the key relationship between space and new modes of production in twentieth-century capitalism. But the production of space now had a more comprehensive meaning:

> What did the Bauhaus introduce that was entirely new at the time? It was, to my mind, the production of space, of course, around the year 1920, although all societies before had produced space, the idea of space creation emerged and became clear. Objects, as such, were no longer created that were finding their place in space, but the power, the technology or whatever that was necessary to create space itself as a new concept and as a new product emerged.[54]

Strictly speaking, this does not significantly develop Lefebvre's reading of the Bauhaus. But Lefebvre's reflection on the Bauhaus during the Universitas project can be stressed to demonstrate that he did not regard the relationship between the Bauhaus and capitalism as deterministic. Rather, the Bauhaus served as an ambiguous reference to the contradictions in the production of space in Lefebvre's demonstration of the ways in which 'space, as we produce it now could come to terms and could also put to use the revolutionary transformations of our thinking, of our modes of living, and of the tools that are disposed of', and his conviction that 'this is one of the things that could be studied by a new institution'.[55]

According to Łukasz Stanek, Lefebvre's account of Modernist architecture 'as opposed to land, land rent, and ownership structures inherited from history' aims to show how 'the dominant production of space does not conceal the possibility of a different development but reveals it'.[56] Here, 'the historic role of the Bauhaus' is also credited for outlining the contradictions within the

current modes of production as a way to transgress them. Hence, the 'discovery' of the production of space by the Bauhaus places architecture at the centre of political struggle in a manner not subordinated to a broader economic base structure. From this vantage, the production of space is the place 'where the relationship between infrastructures and superstructures in society is to be found'.[57] This discovery 'leads directly to the next question: will the *designer* continue working in this space, as he is still doing at the moment? Or will he conceive and carry into effect *another space,* the space of another society and of another life?'[58] For Lefebvre, the failure of the Bauhaus was also linked to an inadequate reply to this question. Nonetheless, the 'discovery' — that space is socially produced — in itself is something he kept returning to.

From the architect as coordinator to the architect as social accelerator

In the previous sections, I suggested that Lefebvre's reading of the Bauhaus is not limited to a critique of its integration with what he calls state-led capitalism. More importantly for Lefebvre, the Bauhaus is a point of reference for considering everyday life and its spatial settings as a medium for social, aesthetic, and political change.[59] As Lefebvre suggested during the Universitas project, the Bauhaus functioned as an important model and point of reference for later practices:

> We should try to introduce a discontinuity in history, at the same time, maintaining a continuity of knowledge, so that whatever we know now may be in some use in, let's say, one generation or in the year 2000. There are, of course, very unfavourable scenarios that come to mind. There is an example, of course, of the very survival of man as species; it can be considered that man could be largely eliminated either through a third world war, or through pollution, or any such destructive happening. But, in order to keep on working, we have, to some measure, to retain at least a slightly favourable idea of the future. And so we go back to the Bauhaus.[60]

But to which Bauhaus should we go back? Throughout the article, I have retraced a marginal trajectory in Lefebvre's thinking that considers the Bauhaus as a somewhat experimental model for rethinking architecture's political capacity regardless of the actual historical outcome and legacy of the school.[61] A more complex historical lineage can be traced especially in his reading of Gropius.[62] For Lefebvre, Gropius's understanding is not limited to a discussion of architecture as supplementary to politics. It responds directly to given policies in design and planning to explore how these can become instrumental for certain political goals, such as responding to the housing question to stabilise society, among others. This presents a way of thinking of architecture itself as a political medium for elaborating different spatial modalities of modern society.

In this context, Lefebvre discusses Gropius's famous idea that the architect should operate as a *coordinator* of society.[63] They should curate architectural solutions for societal problems to steer society in another direction through new built forms:

> Gropius, moreover, saw things in broad terms, suggesting that the architect serve as a coordinator who would unify problems, proceeding from 'a functional study of the house to that of the street, from the street to the city, and finally to regional and national planning.' Unfortunately, the opposite took place: structural planning subjected lower degrees and levels to its own constraints. Can this situation be reversed? The possible, associated with socially transformative activities, is currently impossible. It is not the architect who will 'define a new approach to life' or enable the individual to develop himself or herself on a higher level by throwing off the weight of the everyday, as Gropius believed. It is the new approach to life that will enable the work of the architect, who will continue to serve as a 'social condenser', no longer for capitalist social relationships and the orders that 'reflect' them, but for shifting and newly constituted relationships. The architect may even be able to function as a 'social accelerator', but the economic context that would make this possible must be examined carefully so we are not fooled by words or appearances.[64]

Gropius's ideas of the architect as coordinator and the ways in which architecture and design can be considered to promote political change seem to simultaneously resonate with two opposite tendencies of the Bauhaus in Lefebvre's work. The first conceptualisation is primarily historical, encompassing the broader political logic of Modernism. According to Lefebvre, Gropius here assumes that social change implies total architectonic solutions, from the smallest details to large-scale urban plans. For Lefebvre, this conceptualisation of architecture, defined by Gropius as the 'logical and systematic coordination in the treatment of architectural problems', is too instrumental and mechanistic. This is why it ultimately 'merges with that of industrialisation and the neocapitalist space'.[65]

But the same concept provides a point of departure for Lefebvre's more speculative approach, in which new buildings and architectural forms not only 'reflect' the existing social relations but also accelerate them. In this context, it is not the fixed blueprint of the architect's original intentions and novel forms per se that matter. Rather, architecture serves as an accelerating force towards the unknown future. Elsewhere, Lefebvre refers to the similar idea of 'transduction', a concept borrowed from the natural sciences, to describe a process of converting and transferring different constituents that 'elaborates and constructs a theoretical object, a possible object from information related to reality and a problematic posed by this reality'.[66] In what follows, this transductive method 'gives shape to certain spontaneous mental operations of the planner, the architect, the sociologist, the politician and the philosopher. It introduces rigour in invention and knowledge in utopia'.[67]

Rather frustratingly, Lefebvre leaves the definition of both transduction and acceleration open. Accelerationism in general refers to a highly contested Marxist line of thinking which suggests that latent tendencies in the prevailing mode of production and its dominant technologies bear the promise of an alternative modernity beyond capitalist rationalisation. According to the contemporary 'Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics' by Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, Marx is

> not a thinker who resisted modernity, but rather one who sought to analyse and intervene within it, understanding that for all its exploitation and corruption,

> capitalism remained the most advanced economic system to date. Its gains were not to be reversed but accelerated beyond the constraints of the capitalist value form.[68]

Even if Lefebvre, who is well known for his fierce critique of the primacy of technology, fits poorly to contemporary debates on accelerationism, it is possible to find a parallel between Lefebvre's and Marx's ambiguous conceptualisation of modernisation. Like accelerationist thinkers, Lefebvre does not consider the superstructure of society, which includes architecture, subordinated to the broader economic base structure. Instead, Lefebvre posits that new social relations demand a new space and, even more importantly, that space might feature somewhat unexpected elements that cannot be calculated in advance; rather, it expands that which is considered possible.[69] In addition to the Bauhaus, another frequently recurring example in Lefebvre's writings in this context is the architecture of the Soviet Revolution. In Lefebvre's words:

> Between 1920 and 1930, Russia experienced a tremendous spurt of creative activity. Quite amazingly, Russian society, turned upside down through revolution, managed to produce superstructures (out of the depths) of astonishing novelty. This occurred in just about every field of endeavor, including politics, architecture, and urbanism. These superstructures were far in advance of the existing structures.[70]

A pivotal example here is the 'social condenser' which can be traced back to Russian Constructivism. Historically, this concept referred to architecture's capacity to condense new social relations through new architectural forms in a way that was not entirely limited to the existing material structures, but was also to some extent ahead of them.[71] And even if 'it has become painfully obvious that those structures and the base did a poor job of catching up',[72] Constructivism offered an important lesson, rather than a direct model, for new generations. It demonstrated how architecture plays a pivotal role in attempts to think of a different society.

The same is evident in the ambiguous position of the Bauhaus in Lefebvre's work. While he identifies the strong parallel genealogy that links the Bauhaus with later social formations of neocapitalism, he simultaneously acknowledges that the experimentation with novel architectural forms and creative uses of space prepare new sensorial conceptualisations of space and time that challenge existing social relations. This is how Lefebvre establishes a more affirmative critical position towards Modernist utopianism: the ultimate lesson from the Bauhaus and the Modernist avant-gardes is that revolution can be accelerated by transgressing the old spatial forms through the invention of new ones. For Lefebvre, any attempt to change society without realising this revolution in spatial forms will fall short.[73]

Conclusion

Since its foundation, the meaning and significance of the Bauhaus has been debated from multiple perspectives. This debate is not only architectural, but

more broadly social and political. On the one hand, many early conservative and right-wing critiques characterised the Bauhaus school and movement as 'cultural Bolshevism'; and on the other, left-wing thinkers regarded the Bauhaus as an architectural equivalent of twentieth-century capitalism, an opinion strongly present in Lefebvre's work. Like Tafuri, Lefebvre attempted to debunk the utopianism of Modernist architecture as a reformist compromise between regulated economy and the state.

But this article has suggested that there are more complex relations and nuanced observations to be found in Lefebvre's reading of the Bauhaus. By utilising previously unexamined sources, such as the documentation of the Universitas project, I suggest that his attempts to critically examine the relationship between architecture, capitalism, and society through the legacy of the Bauhaus produced two different interpretations. The first, and better known, aimed to unravel the ideological dimension of utopianism often associated with the Bauhaus: the reformist impulse to renew architectural production and living and housing conditions did not lead to the radical creation of 'a new man in a new environment' that Gropius and others seemed to anticipate. But even if Lefebvre was convinced that Modernist utopianism ultimately failed, in a second and less well-known strand of his thinking, the Bauhaus, and Russian Constructivism, provided an important lesson for a central argument of his work:

> A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realised its full potential; indeed, it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space.[74]

In this light, architecture is not only a direct representation of prevailing social relations; it also plays an anticipatory or even accelerating role towards a future society. By approaching this question critically from the position outlined by Lefebvre, it is possible to reclaim simultaneously a defence and critique of Modernism from a contemporary perspective.[75] What are the conditions for collective social and political change through architecture, in the spirit of the Bauhaus, in the age of climate emergency and other planetary threats if one takes Lefebvre's claim that every political change implies architectural solutions, knowing that architecture alone cannot bring that social change about, seriously? Even if Lefebvre does not provide direct answers, he suggests that the lessons of Modernism are still worth revisiting: 'We can take some inspiration from Bauhaus, from the previous rebellions, from communities and other form of knowledge'.[76] But at the same time, his cautionary conclusion 'that the problems are new, and the science we are after is unknown', in light of the problematic version of Modernism that was historically realised, remains equally relevant.[77]

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Notes and references

1. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 126.
2. In the definition of Modernism, I follow K. Michael Hays who suggests that 'Modernism, whatever we may mean by the term, has something to do with the emergence of new kinds of objects and events and, at the same time, new conceptualizations of their appearance, of the changed event structures and relationship between objects, their producers, their audiences, and consumers'. See K. Michael Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), p. 4.
3. Walter Gropius, cited in Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), p. 26.
4. For the contested nature of the Bauhaus from architectural, social, cultural, and political perspectives, see *Bauhaus Conflicts, 1919–2009: Controversies and Counterparts*, ed. by Philipp Oswalt (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009).
5. Rather than approaching the Bauhaus from the point of view of the history of architecture, my reading is limited to the status of the Bauhaus in critical political theory (Bloch, Tafuri, Lefebvre, etc.). For this type of reading of architecture, see *Political Theory and Architecture*, ed. by Duncan Bell and Bernardo Zacka (London: Bloomsbury, 2020). For a tentative discussion of Lefebvre's reading of the Bauhaus in existing scholarship, see especially Victoria Watson, 'How Henri Lefebvre Missed the Modernist Sensibility of Mies van der Rohe: Vitalism at the Intersection of a Materialist Conception of Space and a Metaphysical Approach to Architecture', *The Journal of Architecture*, 12.1 (2007), 99–112; Graeme Gilloch, 'Seen from the Window: Rhythm, Improvisation and the City', in *Bauhaus and the City,* ed. by Laura Collini and Frank Eckhardt (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), pp. 185–202; Łukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Cathy Turner, *Dramaturgy and Architecture: Theatre, Utopia and the Built Environment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
6. See, for example, *Architecture of the Everyday*, ed. by Deborah Berke (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997); *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, ed. by Ian Borden, Joe Kerr and Jane Rendell (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*, ed. by Jonathan Hughes and Simon Sadler (London: Routledge, 2000); Jeremy Till, Tatjana Schneider and Nishat Awan, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011); *Urban Revolution Now: Henri Lefebvre in Social Research and Architecture*, ed. by Łukasz Stanek, Claude Schmidt and Ákos Moravánszky (London: Routledge, 2014); *The Social (Re)Production of Architecture*, ed. by Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal (London: Routledge, 2017). Nathaniel Coleman has argued that 'it is precisely the empty promises, false hopes and extravagant failures of modernist architecture and urbanism that preoccupied Lefebvre in much of his writings'. See Nathaniel Coleman, *Lefebvre for Architects* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 19.
7. *Back from Utopia: The Challenge of Modern Movement*, ed. by Hubert-Jan Henket and Hilde Heynen (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2002); Mauro F. Guillén, *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
8. Henri Lefebvre, 'Space and State', trans. by Alexandra Kowalski and others, in *Henri Lefebvre: State Space World,* ed. by Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 223–53 (p. 233).

9. In existing research, this complex relationship between Lefebvre and the utopian aspirations of Modernist architecture has resulted in a lively debate on Le Corbusier's role in Lefebvre's theory. See Mick Smith, 'Repetition and Difference: Lefebvre, Le Corbusier and Modernity's (Im)moral Landscape', *Ethics, Place & Environment,* 4.1 (2001), 31–44; Neil Maycroft, 'Repetition and Difference: Lefebvre, Le Corbusier and Modernity's (Im)moral Landscape: a Commentary', *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 5.2 (2002), 135–44; Mick Smith, 'Ethical Difference(s): a Response to Maycroft on Le Corbusier and Lefebvre', *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 5.3 (2002), 260–69.
10. 'Change life! Change Society! These ideas lose completely their meaning without producing an appropriate space. A lesson to be learned from soviet constructivists from the 1920s and 30s, and of their failure, is that new social relations demand a new space, and vice-versa.' Lefebvre, *The Production of the Space*, p. 59. Even though Lefebvre's empirical reference here is Constructivism, I maintain that it is in Lefebvre's reading of the Bauhaus that this lesson is most systematically elaborated and contested.
11. After the publication of Łukasz Stanek's highly important work on Lefebvre, a new interest towards his empirical side has emerged. According to Stanek, 'Lefebvre's theory cannot be understood without accounting for his philosophical readings, neither can it be grasped without acknowledging what was largely forgotten in his work: a number of empirical studies he carried out and supervised within a range of French research institutions, as well as his intense exchanges with architects, urbanists, and planners'. See Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space*, p. viii.
12. Ibid., p. 188.
13. For a more detailed reading of the Bauhaus in the context of Cold War cultural politics, see Greg Castillo, 'The Bauhaus in Cold War Germany', in *Bauhaus Culture*, ed. by Kathleen James-Chakraborty (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2006), pp. 171–93; Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Frederic J. Schwartz, 'The Disappearing Bauhaus: Architecture and its Public in Early Federal Republic', in *Bauhaus Construct: Fashioning Identity, Discourse and Modernism*, ed. by Jeffrey Saletnik and Robin Schuldenfrei (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 61–82.
14. Tahl Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 2–10.
15. In 2018, a critical re-contextualisation of the exhibition was held at the Württembergischer Kunstverein, addressing the political stakes of the Bauhaus 50 exhibition. See 'Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart – 50 Years after 50 Years of the Bauhaus 1968', 24 April 2018 <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/193185/50-years-after-50-years-of-the-bauhaus-1968/> [accessed 15 April 2021].
16. For an overview of architectural groups close to Lefebvre's theory and its problematic relation to Modernist utopianism, see Larry Busbea, *Topologies: The Urban Utopia in France, 1960–1970* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
17. Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture*, p. 3.
18. For an overview of Modernist architecture from the vantage of its political engagement, see Barbara Miller-Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany 1918–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); *Tracing Modernity*, ed. by Mari Hvattum and Christian Hermansen (London: Routledge, 2004); Malcolm Miles, *Urban Avant-Gardes: Art, Architecture and Change* (London: Routledge, 2004).
19. Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), p. 5.
20. Among others, this argument is proposed by Victoria Watson in her critique of Lefebvre's reading of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the third director of the Bauhaus. When Lefebvre was writing his now well-known treatises on the relationship between urbanisation, architecture, and capitalism between 1967 and 1974, Mies had become the iconic and highly

elitist figure of Modern architecture, an easy scapegoat for the failures of Modernism. See Watson, 'How Henri Lefebvre Missed the Modernist Sensibility of Mies van der Rohe'.

21. Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. by Robert Bononno (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 99 (note 193).
22. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 303.
23. Ibid., p. 305.
24. Ibid., p. 124.
25. Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture*, pp. 23–26.
26. Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).
27. Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture*, p. 19.
28. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 17.
29. Neil Brenner, 'Henri Lefebvre's Critique of State Productivism', in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, ed. by Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer and Richard Milgrom (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 231–49 (p. 237).
30. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 304.
31. Ibid., pp. 123–24.
32. Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. by Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), pp. 85–86.
33. Ibid., p. 98.
34. Ibid.
35. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 304.
36. Watson, 'How Henri Lefebvre Missed the Modernist Sensibility of Mies van der Rohe'.
37. Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 99.
38. Lefebvre, *Towards an Architecture of Enjoyment,* trans. by Robert Bononno (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 5.
39. Michael Müller, 'The Dictate of Coldness: Critique from the Left, 1919–1933', in *Bauhaus Conflicts,* ed. by Oswalt, pp. 50–67.
40. Theodor Adorno, 'Functionalism Today', trans. by Jane Newman and John Smith, in *Rethinking Architecture*, ed. by Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 5–18 (p. 14).
41. Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenberg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 190.
42. Ibid.; in addition, see Nathaniel Coleman, 'Building in Empty Spaces: Is Architecture a "Degenerate Utopia"?', *The Journal of Architecture*, 18.2 (2013), 135–66.
43. Cathy Turner has developed this idea further by suggesting that for Lefebvre architecture 'might be devised to allow or "activate" an alternative or transgressive space in dialectical relationship to established possibilities'. See Turner, *Dramaturgy and Architecture*, p. 4.
44. Fredric Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology' (1985), repr. in *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, ed. by K. Michael Hays (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 440–61 (p. 454).
45. David Pinder, 'Reconstituting the Possible: Lefebvre, Utopia and the Urban Question', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 39.1 (2013), 28–45; Nathaniel Coleman, 'Utopian Prospect of Henri Lefebvre', *Space and Culture*, 16.3 (2013), 349–63.
46. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 129.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. For instance, in 1969 Lefebvre participated in a seminar organised by Centre d'Études et de Recherches d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme (CRAUC) in which the Bauhaus was characterised as reactionary. Lefebvre contested this position claiming that it is not the original Bauhaus but later representations of it that were reactionary, given that 'every position

can be hijacked to a certain extent'. Lefebvre, cited in Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space*, p. 148.

50. For a more detailed analysis of the conference and themes discussed, see Felicity D. Scott, *Architecture or Techno-Utopia* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 89–115.
51. See Matthew Holt, 'Baudrillard and the Bauhaus: The Political Economy of Design', *Design Issues*, 32.3 (2016), 55–66.
52. The citations to the Universitas Project discussed here refer to the conference's working papers and transcripts of the recordings that were published in 2006. See *The Universitas Project: Solutions for a Post-Technological Society*, ed. by Emilio Ambasz (New York, NY: The Museum of Modern Art, 2006), p. 366.
53. Schorske, cited in *The Universitas Project*, ed. by Ambasz, p. 299.
54. Lefebvre, cited in *The Universitas Project*, ed. by Ambasz, p. 425.
55. Ibid., p. 426.
56. Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space*, p. 247.
57. Lefebvre, cited in *The Universitas Project*, ed. by Ambasz, p. 172.
58. Ibid.
59. The works of Peter Osborne and John Roberts are enlightening here. For example, Roberts suggests that Lefebvre 'identifies the temporal and spatial organisation of modernity as a means of theorising the forms by which a cultural resistance and critique of capitalism might take place'. See John Roberts, *Philosophizing the Everyday: Revolutionary Praxis and the Fate of Cultural Theory* (London: Pluto, 2006), p. 79; Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995).
60. Lefebvre, cited in *The Universitas Project,* p. 425.
61. This ambiguity towards Modernist utopias comes close to Lefebvre's encounter with many other experimental architectural groups. Especially the ambiguous interpretation of the Bauhaus as an experimental attitude by the French postwar neo-avant-gardist group Situationist International can illuminate the broader context in which Lefebvre made this seemingly paradoxical reading of the Bauhaus. The Situationists attempted to revitalise the experimental attitude of Modernism against its later legacy in which 'the social importance of the experimental avant-garde is apparently less than that of the pseudo-modernist tendencies which don't even bother to pretend to seek change'. See Guy Debord, 'Report on the Construction of Situations', in *The Situationist International Anthology,* ed. and trans. by Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2007), pp. 25–45 (p. 33). In addition, see Lara Schrijver, 'Utopia and/or Spectacle? Rethinking Urban Interventions through the Legacy of Modernism and the Situationist City', *Architectural Theory Review*, 16.3 (2011), 245–58.
62. Cathy Turner has argued that, for Lefebvre, 'the politics of the earlier experimentation under its first director, Walter Gropius (1919–28), is elusive, complex and various'. See Turner, *Dramaturgy and Architecture*, p. 113.
63. 'My idea of the architect as a coordinator—whose business it is to unify the various formal, technical, social and economic problems that arise in connection with building—inevitably led me on step by step from study of the function of the house to that of the street; from the street to the town; and finally to the still vaster implications of regional and national planning.' See Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, trans. by P. Morton Shand (Cambridge, MA; MIT Press, 1965), p. 98.
64. Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, pp. 99–100.
65. Ibid., p. 98.
66. Henri Lefebvre, 'Right to the City', in *Writings on* Cities, ed. and trans. by Eleanore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 63–181 (p. 151).
67. Ibid.

68. Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek, 'Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics', in # *Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. by Robin Mackay and Armen Avenassian (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014), pp. 349–62 (p. 353).
69. Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (London: Routledge, 2004).
70. Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 184.
71. The 'social condenser' is most famously associated with Constructivist architect Moisei Ginzburg and his Narkomfin building. See Michal Murawski and Jane Rendell, 'The Social Condenser: A Century of Revolution through Architecture, 1917–2017', *The Journal of Architecture*, 22.3 (2017), 369–71.
72. Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 184.
73. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 54.
74. Ibid.
75. David Cunningham has called for the 'emancipatory architectural or urban planning project's association with the "Modern" rather than, as many contemporary "ultra-leftists" seem to wish to do, to escape from it'. For Cunningham, this approach 'would, in turn, require more complex historiographies of the "successes" and "failures" of those past modernities'. See David Cunningham, 'Architecture, the Built and the Idea of Socialism', in *Can Architecture Be an Emancipatory Project? Dialogues on Architecture and the Left*, ed. by Nadir Lahiji (Alresford: Zero Books, 2016), pp. 15–32 (p. 30).
76. Lefebvre, cited in *The Universitas Project,* ed. by Ambasz, p. 370.
77. Ibid.

PIII

ARCHITECTURAL UTOPIAS AS METHODS FOR EXPERIMENTING WITH THE (IM)POSSIBLE

by

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8 Architectural Utopias as Methods for Experimenting with the (Im)Possible

Aleksi Lohtaja

Architecture is often considered to be a form of art, in which ideological and utopian dimensions are intertwined. Compared to other forms of art, such as poetry, literature, music, or painting with a utopian function to envision imaginary worlds which critically counter the present, architecture never entirely flees from current society and its material basis. Instead, its utopian aspirations are always materialized through a social and political framework and its restrictions. In this sense, architectural utopianism seems to manifest Karl Mannheim's (1936) seminal argument regarding the coexistence of utopias and ideologies: political ideologies are 'realised' versions of utopian aspirations. However, the extent to which this defines the emancipatory potential of architecture (or utopias in general), is debatable.

The relationship between utopia, architecture and ideology is central to cultural theorist Fredric Jameson in his essay 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology' (Jameson 2000; for a broader contextualization of this text, see Lahiji 2012). In the essay Jameson distinguishes (1) a very critical reading on the relationship between architecture and ideology in the works of Italian architectural theorist Manfredo Tafuri (1935–1994) and (2) more affirmative yet also critical approach to the same matter in the work of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991). For both Lefebvre and Tafuri, it is precisely the close connection between utopianism and ideologies that encloses architecture's role in society. However, even though these two disciplinary approaches to architecture share the idea that architecture reflects the broader conditions and ideologies of society, their conceptualizations of political uses and potentialities for utopias differ fundamentally.

Can these different positions be taken to clarify the contemporary use of the concept of utopia in political and social theory? This article attempts to understand, in which way architectural utopias can be taken as methods for socio-political change (as discussed in the Introduction, see also Levitas 2013; Moylan & Baccolini 2007). I propose that (architectural) utopias are not inherently political in an emancipatory sense, nor do they however function only as plain

ideologies subordinated to reinforced political goals. Instead, I consider utopias as a way to mediate politics and configure another pathway for the future, which implies always a utopian horizon. Rather than thinking this in an ahistorical manner covering architectural utopias in general, my special focus is a critical reading towards modernist architectural utopianism offered by Tafuri and Lefebvre. Utopian thought has of course always implied certain architecture aspects, but the modification of space as an inherently utopian act is situated in the legacy of early twentieth century avant-garde and modernism supplemented by the post-WWI impulse to change society through architectural design. An impulse wherein utopia is not understood only as fixed space, as was the case in the architectural aspects of 'classical utopias', but also as the mode of an activity (Margolin 1997; Heynen 1999; Henket, Heynen & Allan 2002; Hvattum & Hermansen 2004; Miles 2004; Coleman 2012; Lahiji 2019).

In the first part, I will discuss the nature of modernist architectural utopias and their manifested tendency to think that 'society can be changed through design'. I will briefly discuss how this definition has been criticized especially from the point of view of such prominent utopian theorists like Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno, who share the idea that political efficacy of architectural utopias, understood this way, is closer to ideological and even totalitarian political programs than societal liberation.

In the second part, I will outline a more politically nuanced critique towards the definition of modernist architectural utopianism from the point of view of its conformist engagement towards the prevailing society. Theoretically this can be traced especially to Manfredo Tafuri's reading that takes the afterlife of modernist utopianism as his point of reference. Tafuri's critical reading finds an empirical touchpoint in early twentieth century architectural utopianism, such as Russian Constructivism, The Bauhaus, New Frankfurt, the housing policies of socialist Red Vienna, and other modernist architectural movements, that are often considered socialist or left-leaning attempts to design society beyond classical nineteenth century capitalism. However, Tafuri saw their reformist attitude towards society failing to understand the simultaneous transformation of capitalism and for example how the ideas of socialist de-commodified housing were best realized throughout the reorganization of

capitalism towards a Taylorist-Fordist mode of production. Here the utopian aspirations function as the reproduction of society – an aspect that is commonly referred to as ideological, especially in Marxist scholarship.

Tafuri's Marxist reading of modernist utopianism seems to reflect the general tendency to consider 'utopian' and 'Marxist' approaches as opposite poles. Here, however, especially Lefebvre's discussion of architectural utopias, examined in the third part, from another Marxist perspective offers another way to the problematic relationship between utopia and ideology. While Lefebvre's theory has significant similarities with Tafuri's as regards the ideological dimension of modernist utopianism, the focus of his critique is not in the relationship between utopia and ideology per se, but instead in different conceptualizations of architectural utopias. Lefebvre's attempt to come in terms with the problematic co-existence of the utopian and ideological dimension of modernist architecture is hence not based on the rejection of the notion of *utopianism* in general, but instead on the attempt to find another conceptualization of utopia moving from reformist conformism to experimentation with different possible modalities of the future.

In the final part, I think through the alternative approach offered by Lefebvre from the point of view of the hypothesis of this book: utopias as methods for social and political change. Rather than residing on the ideologically fixed blueprints, the conceptualization of architectural utopias from this point of view is more interested in experimenting with what is considered possible as a deliberate method for expanding political imagination towards new horizons.

Modernist architecture as a degenerate utopia?

The interplay between modernist architectural utopianism and its ideological connotations found in the works by Tafuri and Lefebvre deciphers a broader tension related to the role of architecture in the theories of art and politics. Here especially the contested legacy of modernist architectural utopianism serves as an empirical point of reference. Modernism in architecture refers here first and foremost to architecture's relationship to society rather than

to any particular architectural style. It emerges from the avant-gardist attempt to think the boundaries between art and life anew. As Hilde Heynen suggests:

> 'The issues and themes around which the modern movement in architecture crystallized are related to the avant-garde logic of destruction and construction. Here too what was involved first of all was a rejection of the bourgeois culture of philistinism that used pretentious ornament and kitsch and which took the form of eclecticism. In its stead the desire for purity and authenticity was given precedence. All ornamentation was regarded as unacceptable; instead, authenticity was required in the use of materials, and it was thought that a constructional logic should be clearly visible in the formal idiom. In the twenties these themes also acquired a distinct political dimension: The New Building became associated with the desire for a more socially balanced and egalitarian form of society in which the ideals of equal rights and emancipation would be realized.' (Heynen 1999, 28.)

How is this then any different from any architectural utopias given that especially the classical conceptualization of utopias takes also often the shape of spatial geographical form? Picturing of ideal city implies always that architecture and city planning are ways to either produce or maintain ideal social forms and harmony (Pinder 2005). However, while this idea of the ideal city is largely present in modernist planning and architecture as well, there emerges another utopian impulse that goes beyond picturing a fixed spatial plan for an ideal society. Here utopias are considered more as an activity. By contesting and politicizing the questions associated to living and spatial structures of everyday life - modernist architecture directly mounts attacks towards previous modes of living and for example classical nineteenth century bourgeois conceptualization of interior and class and power -relations inherent in them. Hence, this *destructive* aspect of modernism puts forth a different utopian emphasis towards the classical *construction* of blueprints. Moreover, the problem with modernist utopianism is no longer the lack of politics per se (as in classical spatial utopias that imagine worlds in harmony beyond political conflicts), but the conceptualization of politics through reified forms of

everyday life. This raises a question of whether modern architectural utopias are degenerate, as they do not offer radical negation from society, in the way in which for example utopian painting or literature are believed to offer.

Hence the issue is not only the relationship between architecture and utopia in general, but specifically the particular conceptualization of politics in the utopian aspirations of modernist architecture and the avant-garde. Additionally, this seems to constitute something of a challenge that still defines the future of utopian thought in thinking politically on architectural practices and their utopian aspirations (Henket, Heynen & Allan 2002; Cunningham 2001). But are we talking about ideology or utopia here? Here a good point of reference is the discussion on the convolutions between art and politics within the Frankfurt school and critical theory more broadly. The central common denominator in these discussions is the idea that the utopian dimension of artwork resides in its capability to offer a counter-image, seeing utopia as a negation or counter-image of society rather than deliberately engaging with it. As architecture is necessarily physically rooted in the existing world, however, its utopian dimension appears highly problematic in these readings.

Addressing the relationship between artistic practice and emancipatory political theory and the tendency to consider critical and utopian dimension artwork to show a different world out-of-reach that is actually only as a wish for better being, Gabriel Rockhill, for instance, has shown that the very definition implies the exclusion of architecture. Rockhill maintains that 'regarding design and production, to begin with, architecture and public art almost always take place, in our day and age, in a constructed milieu, or at the very least within the charted territories of traversed landscapes. They cannot, therefore, be easily isolated from their immediate inscription in a larger sociopolitical space' (Rockhill 2014, 22). Considered from this point of view, modernist architectural utopias appear as 'degenerate utopias', combining too straightforwardly art and life and being hence examples of how art and politics should not merge (see Coleman 2013).

This pessimistic tone can be traced back especially to Theodor W. Adorno and Ernst Bloch, whose theories on art's utopian capability of showing alternative worlds remain influential.

They both suggested, that the core of art's critical and utopian potential is to outline an autonomous expression of a different society, which is in many respects the opposite of, for example, the deliberate attempt to shape society by design having also ideological connotations. These readings have reinforced a certain pessimistic tone towards architecture in proceeding theories of art's role in critical theory defending art's autonomy and considering architecture as unable to propose any real utopian alternative when rather straightforwardly adopting and affirming the capitalist idea of rationalization as the core of modernity.

As already stated, these debates on the relationship between the utopian and the ideological dimension of architecture are primarily about modernist architecture. This is evident especially in Bloch's writings on the utopian function of art. As Nathaniel Coleman argues regarding the possibility to combine Blochian utopian thinking to architectural alternatives, 'Bloch identified the inextricable bond between Utopia and hope in almost everywhere but in architecture' (Coleman 2013, 135). Bloch maintains that modern architecture and its utopian aspiration 'cannot at all flourish in the late capitalist hollow space' given that it is 'far more than the other arts, a social creation' (Bloch 1988, 188). This resonated with Bloch's early work on the utopianism of artwork: for art to be utopian, it needs to have a certain transcendental aura that detaches itself from regular use and everyday objects. Bloch argues that modern architecture with its emphasis on function cannot detach artwork from the current state of things. Instead it is compatible with the modernist ideology of progress creating a 'hollow space of capitalism' (ibid.).

Similarly, with Bloch, Adorno argued that the revolutionary aspect of architecture cannot escape given social relations. Utopian and emancipatory aspirations in modern architecture were according to Adorno 'conditioned by a social antagonism over which the greatest architecture has no power: the same society which developed human productive energies to unimaginable proportions has chained them to conditions of production imposed upon them' (Adorno, cited in Leach 1997, 14). The utopian dimension of art, its ornamental addition that detaches itself from reality, cannot be found from architecture realized through material and social restrictions. These readings seem to already be anticipating that the true nature of the

utopia of modernist architecture was somewhat of an ideological compromise which materialized through Fordism and Taylorism (Coleman 2012). This argument is most systematically argued by Manfredo Tafuri.

Utopia turned ideology

In 1969, Tafuri published a highly polemic article, *Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,* that was later expanded into the book *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (1973/1976). Challenging the prevailing art historical explanation of emergence of modern architecture, Tafuri, informed by Marxist thought, proceeded to see the development of new ideas of modernist architecture and design in a dialectical relationship with capitalist development. The 'utopia' proposed by modernist architects was for him in fact inseparable from the broader capitalist development of the time.

At stake in the criticism of utopianism was the question concerning the nature of the political efficacy of architecture. Rather than revolutionising the society, the conformist modern architecture, according to Tafuri, offered a reformist way to integrate new social demands into the reorganization of capital. In this way modernist architecture did not present a rupturing counter-image towards the contemporary society or any profound avant-gardist destruction, but instead ended up formulating a 'utopia serving the objectives of the reorganization of production' (Tafuri 1976, 98). This meant constant cross-overs between the Fordist and Taylorist mode of production and an avant-gardist experimental culture in the first part of the twentieth century: 'Design, as a method of organizing production more than of configuring objects, did away with the utopian vestiges inherent in the poetics of the avant-gardes. Ideology was no longer superimposed on activity—which was now concrete because it was connected to real cycles of production—but was inherent in the activity itself.' (ibid.)

This can be seen in the context of the broader question concerning reform or revolution in twentieth century Marxist thought. Here the reformist way implied the realisation of utopia in a strange reversed form in which architecture 'becomes a pedagogical act and a means of

collective integration' (ibid., 132). For Tafuri, the immersion and incorporation of utopian aspects of modernism into broader capitalist development can be understood through the Marxist concept of ideology. In this way Tafuri's reading is undoubtedly informed by (albeit not systematically discussed in relation to) Althusserian structural Marxism on the reproduction of capitalism through various 'ideological state apparatuses' in it (in this case most importantly, urban planning, housing, architecture, design etc.) that offers more complex reading of ideologies that just notions of 'false consciousness' (Althusser 2014). In this regard, Tafuri was informed also by Italian autonomist Marxism, including figures such as Antonio Negri, at the same time suggesting that the developments of Keynesian economics, strong welfare state and Fordist regime of capitalist accumulation based on somewhat mutual agreement and compromise between capital and (industrial) workforce (for Tafuri's political context, see Aureli 2008).

By emphasising the historical forms of ideological dimensions of architectural utopias, especially modernism, Tafuri's reading is also to be understood in terms of a 'classical' Marxist critique of utopias, in which the notion of ideology is associated primarily with non-materialist conceptualizations of history such as idealism and its utopian nature. By discussing this failure of non-materialist 'utopian' approaches especially in relation to architecture and urban planning, Tafuri is hence continuing a critique already familiar from Engels and his fundamental distrust toward other socialist movements and anarchist traditions, but above else the tradition of utopian socialism and its idealistic connotations. In the famous *Zur Wohnungsfrage,* Engels directly confronted this type of utopianism and argued that it provides little more than a bourgeois solution to the housing crisis and that housing is derivate to broader problems of capitalism that need to be overcome:

> 'The housing shortage from which the workers and part of the petty bourgeoisie suffer in our modern big cities is one of the innumerable smaller, secondary evils which result from the present-day capitalist mode of production. It is not at all a direct result of the exploitation of the worker as worker by the capitalist. This

> exploitation is the basic evil which the social revolution wants to abolish by abolishing the capitalist mode of production.'[24]

This type of Marxist tradition builds itself on the critique of utopianism and its idealistic connotations, which is considered as an opponent to Marxism and historical materialism. The common theme from Engels to Tafuri among others, is a certain detachment between utopian social critique and the analysis of capital and materialist conceptualization of history. As stated by Tafuri: 'It is useless to propose purely architectural alternatives. The search for alternatives within the structures that condition the very character of architectural design is indeed an obvious contradiction of terms.' (Tafuri 1976, 181.) Seen this way, utopian traditions not only miss the point, but also to some extent reinforce the ideological dimension of capitalism through its reformist tendencies. In what follows, this contests the whole core of modernist architectural utopianism and the avant-garde: it is literally impossible to change society through design.

However, as I will argue in the next section, this type of conclusion covers primarily utopias as understood from the point of view of their outcomes and different pathways remain if one considers utopias primarily as action and process, immanently revolutionizing what is considered possible (see also Lakkala in this volume). Even though Tafuri's criticism offers a way to highlight the problems related to reformist tendencies of architectural utopias and their lack of critical analysis emerging, especially from the point of view of critique of ideologies and insights from historical materialism, I maintain the utopian aim of changing society through design is not necessarily to be interpret as an attempt to make blueprints, but it could be also characterized as a mode of activity: an experimental site for politics. This is based on another conceptualization found in the writings of Henri Lefebvre that is discussed in the following section.

[24] https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/housing-question/

From abstract utopianism to experimental utopias

The work by Henri Lefebvre offers another conceptualization of the relationship between modernist architecture, utopias and the coexisting ideological dimension.[25] Additionally Lefebvre, like Tafuri, emphasizes especially the ideological dimension of modernist utopianism. According to Coleman, for example, 'it is precisely the empty promises, false hopes and extravagant failures of modernist architecture and urbanism that preoccupied Lefebvre in much of his writings' (Coleman 2015, 19). However, at the same time Lefebvre never neglects the utopian aspiration of an especially modernist conceptualization of utopias as an activity altogether. Instead, there are two opposite conceptualizations of a utopia and proponents of utopias simultaneously coexisting:

> 'An opposition is continuously at work between abstract and concrete utopias. This enables us to distinguish utopists from utopians. (…) Abstract utopia relies on technocrats; they are the ones who want to build the perfect city. They concern themselves with the 'real': needs, services, transport, the various subsystems of urban reality, and the urban itself as a system. They want to arrange the pieces of a puzzle to create an ideal. Contrast this with concrete utopia, which is negative. It takes as a strategic hypothesis the negation of the everyday, of work, of the exchange economy. It also denies the State and the primacy of the political. It begins with enjoyment and seeks to conceive of a new space, which can only be based on an architectural project.' (Lefebvre 2014, 148.)

Here Lefebvre is largely following the distinction between an abstract and a concrete utopia, as outlined by Bloch (see Introduction), but strikingly in the context of urban planning and architecture, areas that Bloch considered generally anti-utopian (see also Coleman 2013; 2015). First, there are negative interpretations associated with (especially modernist) utopianism.

[25] Lefebvre also confronted Tafuri in person. They both were invited to a conference held in 1972 by the research group on urban sociology located at the Paris 10 University. In the conference, Lefebvre accused Tafuri of having a tendency of explaining everything as ultimately working for capitalism thus leaving no room for alternatives (Stanek 2011, 165–167).

Abstract utopianism is frequently referred to as a *scientific and positivistic utopia* by Lefebvre*,* which can be understood as a conceptualisation of utopia that resides only in abstract representations of spaces which dismiss the experimental and transgressive aspects of utopian thinking (Lefebvre 1996, 151). For Lefebvre, this is the most obvious way to think of the spatial dimension of utopias (Lefebvre 2014, 141). Traditional or classical utopias (such as More, Campanella, Bacon) are in Lefebvre's theory 'characterized by an emphasis on architectural form, geometric designs and rigid spatial order'. From a more modern perspective, they also 'have a related concern with control, regulation and modes of surveillance' (Pinder 2005, 21).

In this sense, there are important parallels between Lefebvre and Tafuri regarding thinking architectural utopianism and ideology as intertwined. What Tafuri calls architecture as ideology, appears to Lefebvre as a somewhat abstract utopia understood as a conformist engagement and commitment to building a new society. This calls for an urban planning that would integrate new architectural solutions with societal reforms. However, while remaining critical towards general utopianism, and modernist architectural utopias in particular in a similar way to Tafuri, Lefebvre acknowledged that utopias can have a disintegrating role. This leads to an internal distinction between two types of utopias: 'While abstract utopia is a 'positive' extrapolation of the status quo, concrete utopia is 'negative,' that is to say it contradicts the premises of the current social order: the everyday defined by the division of labour, economy of exchange, and the state as the primary agent of economic regulation and political subjectivity.' (Lefebvre 2014, 151.)

For Tafuri, critical architecture practices as such cannot exist, but thinking architecture, urban planning and housing differently requires an entirely different society and a different economic system. Lefebvre offers a more complex argument regarding the role of relationships between architectural practices and the production of space under capitalism, and hence also a conceptualisation of utopia. Encapsulating the difference, Frank Cunningham has suggested that 'like Tafuri, he sees utopian visions as ideologically infused, but they can also serve in an experimental way to prompt challenges to existing structures, functions and forms'

(Cunningham 2010, 270). Thinking utopian as 'a partisan of possibilities' rather than 'utopist', Lefebvre writes that:

> 'For me this term has no pejorative connotations. Since I do not ratify compulsion, norms, rules and regulations; since I put all the emphasis on adaptation; since I refute 'reality', and since for me what is possible is already partly real, I am indeed a utopian; you will observe that I do not say utopist; but a utopian, yes, a partisan of possibilities. But then are we not all utopians?' (Lefebvre 1984, 192.)

This leads to another conceptualization of utopias found in Lefebvre's work – to which he simultaneously refers to as both a concrete utopia and an experimental utopia. Lefebvre introduced the concept of an experimental utopia already in 1961 as a critique of what he called the post-war functional urbanism as the realised legacy of modernist utopianism, where the efficacy of architecture was primarily understood in terms of how it serves society and reproduces the conditions of production. Against this Lefebvre attempted to find different utopian connotations embodied in architecture as a category for mediating what is considered possible. For Lefebvre, this type of utopia is defined as 'explorations of human possibilities, with the help of the image and imagination, accompanied by an incessant critique and an incessant reference to the given problematic in the real' (Lefebvre 1961, see also Pinder 2015, 37).

Experimental utopia is thus contrasted with abstract utopianism and the reformist tendencies of modernist architecture. Whereas abstract utopianism, aimed at providing a certain blueprint for an ideal society beyond conflicts; the political logic of experimental utopias seems to be quite the opposite, creating disharmony and disintegration to the current state of things by expanding the scope of what is considered possible. To fully understand utopian practice as a dialectical movement between possible and impossible, blurring the boundaries between these two categories, Lefebvre maintains that it is necessary to understand utopias as a sphere for experimentation and invention of new ways of living, this also disintegrating the prevailing society and its space. Here utopia is not any grand ontological statement, but a tactical intervention to current state of things and a mediation between the possible and the

impossible. To grasp this idea, Lefebvre used the concept 'transduction', familiar especially from natural sciences, to describe the conversion and transfer of different constituents:

> 'Transduction elaborates and constructs a theoretical object, a possible object from information related to reality and a problematic posed by this reality. Transduction assumes an incessant feedback between the conceptual framework used and empirical observations. Its theory (methodology), gives shape to certain spontaneous mental operations of the planner, the architect, the sociologist, the politician and the philosopher. It introduces rigour in invention and knowledge in utopia.' (Lefebvre 1996, 151.)

This approach comes close to what David Harvey, heavily inspired by Lefebvre's theory has called 'dialectical utopianism' situated in various architectural and spatial practices. It is based on existing concrete social relations and a material basis, but it simultaneously attempts to surpass them within (Harvey 2004). As such, it is an attempt that defines both the work by Lefebvre and Tafuri to show that Marxist thought and utopian thought can mutually coexist. Here a striking example is precisely both the success and the failure of modernist architecture and classical avant-garde for realizing that every political rupture requires a utopian envisioning of new space as the framework for becoming a political register:

> 'Change life! Change Society! These ideas lose completely their meaning without producing an appropriate space. A lesson to be learned from soviet constructivists from the 1920s and 30s, and of their failure, is that new social relations demand a new space, and vice-versa.' (Lefebvre 1991, 59.)

The simultaneous proclaimed failure stated by Lefebvre here is that the picturing of the impossible did not go far enough and was still articulated within the prevailing framework of the possible rather than beyond it. Regardless, the notion of this failure seems to be more of an affirmative critique. Compared to Tafuri, but also to Adorno and Bloch, Lefebvre's theory not only criticizes the history of architectural utopianism for their ideological function of reinforcing

the status quo. It also acknowledges the possibility to function also as a form of social criticism by expanding political imagination through architectural forms, experimentations and projects.

Therefore, while remaining critical to the realization of architectural utopianism in the forms Tafuri would call ideology, Lefebvre never neglected the idea of an alternative space beyond capitalism. It remained a source for inspiration in later forms of experimental architecture. Even though Lefebvre does not exclude the connection between (modernist) architectural utopianism and its relation to capitalist development (as Tafuri does), he argues at least for methodological isolation as 'the only way forward towards clear thinking, the only way to avoid the incessant repetition of the idea that there is nothing to be done, nothing to be thought, because everything is 'blocked', because capitalism rules and co-opts everything, because the 'mode of production' exists as system and totality, to be rejected or accepted in accordance with the principle all or nothing' (Lefebvre 2014, 4). This is largely echoed by Jameson, who in a similar manner is concerned that a Tafurian-style critique of certain problematic dimensions of particular architectural utopias nullifies the stimulus to think that the surroundings of our lives can be altered.

Here the experimentation related to utopia is understood as a transgressive activity. Going beyond Tafuri, the notion of utopianism of modernism is not rejected in general but their actual outcome is set against their original utopian aspirations. To conclude: compared to Tafuri's critique of utopianism, Lefebvre's understanding of architecture, understood from the point of view of experimental utopia, is not only a reflection of modes of production, but also a site of political struggle and an active ground for reclaiming different meanings, discourses, and interpretations.[26]

Architectural utopias as methods for experimenting with the (im)possible

[26] As Michael Gardiner suggests: "Lefebvre does not promote a dualistic transcendentalism in which daily life is denigrated, but rather an 'everyday utopianism' in which routine and creativity, the trivial and extraordinary, are viewed as productively intertwined rather than opposed.' (Gardiner 2004, 228.)

Challenging Tafuri's reading on the ideological dimension of architectural utopias, Lefebvre considered architecture also as a medium for different practices, where collective subjectivities and their relations to political, social, and cultural form are opened up for contestation. Lefebvre's solution is not hence to reject utopianism in general, but instead to change the conceptualization of utopias from integration to experimentation. By rejecting the standard wisdom; that architectural utopia necessarily implies a blueprint, Lefebvre moves the emphasis towards experimental activity when thinking about utopias. This experimental dimension of utopias is understood as transgressive dynamics between the possible and the impossible, which redefines the notion of utopia.

In this sense, configuring the relationship between architecture and utopianism is not just a discussion on how architecture can contribute to thinking about utopian goals. Instead, it is about thinking political transformation itself: What type of act is architectural design? What does it bring to the world? How does it promote a different conceptualization of the future? How does it challenge the existing spatial orders of society? In this sense, architecture not only reflects utopian goals, but constructs them experimentally, bringing future possibilities to the active deliberation of the now.

What is the actuality of these positions for contemporary utopian studies? Based on this assessment, I suggest a re-introduction of Lefebvre's affirmative critique that considers architectural utopias as a sphere for experimenting what is considered possible as a pathway towards political change. Here utopia is not a fixed outcome, but more of a tool and a method. The methodological notion of utopias is associated especially with the work of Ruth Levitas, who proceeds to consider utopias not as ultimate goals but instead as processes where possible pathways for the future are examined as a methodological way to understand the possibilities for social transformation (Levitas 2013).[27]

[27] Here I am also informed by Nathaniel Coleman, who argues in a similar way, that the notion of utopia as method comes close to Lefebvre's conceptualization of utopia (Coleman 2014; 2015).

While the discussion here is primarily historical, we outline that this emphasis offers more politically nuanced ways of considering utopias first and foremost as tools for political change in various areas of human activity. These challenge, especially the still dominant, Blochian way to detach utopias from concrete political struggles and the material existence of society and instead are situated in the counter-image of present day society and offer expressions for better being.

Understanding utopias only as expressions for better being is problematic, in the sense that this makes utopias take distance from society and politics, leaving little room for the actual potentiality of social and political change (Chrostowska & Ingram 2017; see also Lakkala in this volume). After all, especially in the current political climate, it is not only a vague 'utopian wish' that is required, but more concrete, material and effective tools, utopias as methods for and committed to socio-political change even though there are always ideological connotations present in these types of attempts.

Thinking this in terms of how architecture can facilitate this type of social and political change, I have argued throughout this chapter that Lefebvre's theory offers one way to mediate these types of attempts to materialize utopian aspirations. Here again the notion of method is crucial. As Cathy Turner suggests, Lefebvre's somewhat partial isolation from a capitalist mode of production, or what Jameson calls an attempt to claim a semi-autonomous sphere for architecture at least partially separable from its ideological connotation, is first and foremost 'devised to allow or 'activate' an alternative or transgressive space in dialectical relationship to established possibilities' (Turner 2015, 4). Here the expected political outcomes are not in a future ideal society, but in the political negotiation of what can be thought.

The conceptualization of utopia in this way, is not limited only to Blochian wish-images or a Tafurian critique of ideologies, but it is also embodied in 'real' material forms where 'utopias embraces this tension between dreams and practice. It is grounded in the belief that what is pragmatically possible is not fixed independently of our imaginations, but is itself shaped by our visions' (Wright 2010, 6). The necessary task for thinking utopias as transformative political action is also to materialize them. This is a process of which architecture as configuring utopian

spaces in actually existing forms is a good example. Utopias understood this way, as experimental mediums, aim not at providing a direct spatial setting for a revolution, but this type of utopianism is an immanent, revolutionary action in itself, constantly revolutionising what is considered possible and the boundaries of the given. The future is the open possible of becoming something else, utopias are methods for aesthetico-politically configuring that pathway.

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PIV

DESIGNING DISSENSUAL COMMONSENSE: CRITICAL ART, ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN IN JACQUES RANCIÈRE'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Designing Dissensual Common Sense: Critical Art, Architecture, and Design in Jacques Rancière's Political Thought

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ABSTRACT How can design be socially engaged and politically efficient, as proposed by discourses labeled as critical design? This article introduces a conceptualization and historiography of politically charged design discourse based on philosopher Jacques Rancière's work on the intersections of politics, aesthetics, and critical artistic practices. By focusing especially on Rancière's reading of the genealogy of design from Ruskin to constructivism and the Bauhaus, the article aims to show that there is an important connection between design and politics present in Rancière's thought. Rather than solely revealing the oppressive dimension embedded in designed forms, for Rancière, design is itself a profound process of aesthetical and sensorial

reconfiguration of the way in which we perceive and articulate our communal existence in "the shared material world." The article suggests that this connection is useful for examining the broader encounter of critical design with political theory.

KEYWORDS: critical design, political design, political theory, Jacques Rancière, aesthetics

Introduction: From Critical Theory to Critical Design

In recent years, there has emerged a new interest towards the political dimension of design that critically address political and social issues through designed forms (Fuad-Luke 2013; Kimbell 2011 Mazé and Ericson 2011; Julier 2013; Irwin 2015; Pater 2016; van Borries 2016; Manzini 2019; Resnick 2019). Countering what is understood as market-oriented design, design practice is reclaimed with theoretical, political, and philosophical function mediating fundamental concerns about the human condition and ways of being together; issues traditionally associated with political theory and political philosophy (Yaneva 2009; Fry 2011, 2013; Fry, Dilnot, and Stewart 2015; DiSalvo 2012; Willis 2018; Keshavarz 2019; Tassinari and Staszowski 2020).[1]

Such reconsideration of design has taken place especially in the emergence of critical design, first theorized by Dunne and Raby (1999, 2013) and recently revised by Malpass (2017) and Tharp and Tharp (2019), among others. Critical design is an umbrella concept emphasizing the political potentiality of design and hence challenging "narrow assumptions, preconceptions and givens about the role products play in everyday life" (Dunne and Raby 2013, 34). It is not limited to a single movement or practice. Instead, it is a "form of socially and politically engaged activity" (Malpass 2017, 6), including a range of socially and politically oriented design approaches, such as "participatory design, co-design, design-activism, feminist design, and, more recently, socially responsive and transition design" (Malpass 2017, 8). Instead of one clear conceptual definition, there exists common ground between overlapping practices, including "speculative design, critical design, design fiction, design futures, antidesign, radical design, interrogative design, design for debate, adversarial design, discursive design, and futurescaping" (Dunne and Raby 2013, 11). To some extent, the emergence of critical design also repeats the discourses of "critical architecture" present from the 1970s onwards, in which architectural design is not only about building but broader speculative and theoretical realm re-examining societal values (Rendell et al. 2007).

The definitions of critical design are theoretically oriented. Recent scholarship has outlined especially the resemblance between "critical design" and "critical theory." Jeffrey Bardzell and Shaowen Bardzell

have suggested that critical design ought to be explicitly contextualized to a theoretical framework of critical theory because "critical design has unmistakable affinities with it" (Bardzell and Bardzell 2013, 3298). Marjanne van Helvert has stated that "the field of socially committed design would benefit considerably from a more widespread historical awareness and more developed critical theory" (van Helvert 2016, 27). Simon Bowen outlines that "critical theory (via critical design) could enable designers and users to devise products and systems with radically different roles and functions" (Bowen 2010, 1). In these approaches, critical theory is often understood in its broad sense, not limited solely to the Critical Theory of Frankfurt School scholars (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Habermas). Instead, critical theory "includes the Frankfurt School of critical theory and the explosion of critical theory between the 1950s and 1980s, which included semiotics, poststructuralism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and Marxism" (Bardzell and Bardzell 2013, 3300; see also Dant 2004).

Common to these different approaches labeled as critical theory is that theoretical practice ought not only to reflect or explain society but aim to reveal, criticize, and change the dominant forms of oppressive power structures and hidden ideological frameworks that maintain the status quo. Critical design, in turn, thinks this in relation to design practices contesting power relations, values, and societal norms and hierarchies: to design is to make a critical, projective, and reflexive argument on the construction and delamination of the current state of things and how the world can be thought otherwise throughout design provocations (Bardzell et al. 2012, 289; Prado de O. Martins 2014).

But how should the relationship between critical theory and critical design be theorized given that there also exists multiple historical, theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary differences and concerns between the two? This article proposes one plausible theoretical framework for critical design by examining the relationship between art, politics, and design in Jacques Rancière's political thought, ranging from industrial design to architecture. Rancière is one of the most-cited contemporary French philosophers and critical political theorists, known especially for his reconsideration of the relationship between art and politics and their critical efficacies. For Rancière, both art and politics have the same function: to critically examine and challenge the sensorial and aesthetic framework of what is considered common, normal, and visible. This involves broad reflexive and interdisciplinary questioning, evaluation, and contestation of what is considered normal status quo and whether it can be thought differently.

In a broad sense, Rancière fits the definition of critical theory as described above. However, his political thought is also considered to offer somewhat more nuanced and reconsidered articulation for the conditions of being critical compared to many other critical theorists. To be critical, according to Rancière, is not limited to revealing

oppressive ideologies and power relations embedded in cultural practices (Rancière 2009b, 25–49; see also Lampert 2019). This is especially an event regarding overlapping discourses between critical theory and critical art. Rancière strongly rejects a definition of critical art as "a type of art that sets out to build awareness of the mechanisms of domination to turn the spectator into a conscious agent of world transformation" (Rancière 2009a, 45). Such definition suggests that art has the capability of revealing hidden ideological dimensions, power relations, and forms of domination that seduce people to be passive against their interest and, by doing so, raising new awareness that mobilizes alternative modes of collective action. For Rancière, such causal assumption, however, ultimately forecloses a more profound critical dimension of both politics and art as something that cannot be fully calculated in advance (Rancière 2009a, 2009b; see also Lampert 2017, 190–2; Chanter 2017, 115). Instead, for Rancière, "critical art is not so much a type of art that reveals the forms and contradictions of domination as it is an art that questions its own limits and powers, that refuses to anticipate its own effects" (Rancière 2015, 157).

What is the relevance of Rancière's thought for contemporary politically and socially oriented design studies and critical design practices? The purpose of this article is not to discuss concrete examples of critical design from the point of view of Rancière's thought or participate in the vivid debate over different strains of critical design in general. Instead, the article aims to show how Rancière's discussion of design and its political function implies a similar redefinition of critique that is associated with his expansion of critical art. The article further suggests that this might be useful for examining the broader theoretical connection between critical design and critical theory as well. Rather than solely revealing the oppressive dimension embedded in designed forms, for Rancière, design is itself a profound process of aesthetic and sensorial reconfiguration of the way in which we perceive and articulate our communal existence in "the shared material world" (Rancière 2009c, 91).

What is interesting from this perspective is not only direct political outcomes of design butalso the process of design itself as a way to produce, reproduce, and contest what is considered common sense in a given community. From this perspective, as the article aims to show, Rancière can be taken as a rare example of a political philosopher and critical theorist directly engaging with design, particularly from a perspective that also acknowledges and affirms design's inherent and profound critical political agency. The hypothesis of this article is that, by contextualizing, clarifying, and elaborating this demarcation between design and politics revolving around the constitution and contestation of communal existence, a more nuanced understanding of design's critical potential can be theorized further.

Rancière's relevance for design theory has been increasingly addressed in recent scholarship. Keshavarz and Mazé (2013) have

suggested that Rancière's theory can help us to think about the role of disagreement instead of consensus as a basis of political activity in socially engaged design practices. Furthermore, with particular focus on Rancière's conceptualization of aesthetics as political activity, Thomas Markussen (2013) has proposed that politically charged "design activism" should be understood as Rancièrean "disruptive aesthetics," meaning a broader aesthetical change and disruption it may provoke. In the context of architectural design and urban planning, Camillo Boano and Emily Kelling (2013, 46) have argued that, to understand how design can be understood as political, it can benefit from Rancière's reading of politics as "invention of sensible forms and material structures for a life to come". Virginia Tassinari (2018, 255) similarly states that "reading design for social innovation through the eyes of Rancière's idea of aesthetics, allows us to see that design and *politics* have much more in common".

This article aims to push these insights further by arguing that Rancière's demarcations between design and politics need to be contextualized within Rancière's broader historical investigations on what he calls the aesthetic regime of art. Known especially from his historical studies concerning the politics of literature and cinema and reinterpretation of artistic categories such as modernism and the avant-garde, Rancière has also recently engaged in rethinking the historical development of industrial design and architecture from Arts and Crafts to Constructivism, Deutscher Werkbund, the Bauhaus, and beyond (Rancière 2009c, 91–107, 2013a, 133–53, 2017a, 2017b). For Rancière, the aesthetic regime of art does not provide direct models for contemporary critical artistic practices. However, it helps us to further theorize how art and also design are not critical only when directly tackling political, social, or ecological problems; instead, at stake is always broader readjustment of our perception towards the world.

Art, Aesthetics, and Politics in Rancière's Thought

Attempting to grasp a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between arts and politics, Rancière has strongly emphasized the aesthetic constitution of politics. Rancière understands politics as an inherently aesthetic matter: politics is about a sensorial construction of what is considered a common world (Rancière 1999, 58). According to many, Rancière's approach has profoundly challenged the understanding of political art, the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and, consequently, the critical efficacies of critical artistic practices over the past decades (see, for example, Erjavec 2015; Hindeliter et al. 2009; Rockhill 2014; Plot 2014; Chanter 2017; Bray 2017; Panagia 2018; Feola 2018).

The emphasis of aesthetics in relation to politics can be traced to Rancière's reworking of German enlightenment philosophy, from William Baumgarten to Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller, considering aesthetics as common sense (*sensus communis*), meaning the

conditions of knowledge of given time and place (Chanter 2017, 101–119; Rockhill 2014, 145). For Rancière, aesthetics

> as the system of *a priori* forms determin[es] what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determining the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it. (Rancière 2013b, 8)

In this sense, Rancière continues especially Kantian critical philosophy examining the sensorial construction of the conditions and boundaries of knowledge. Both art and politics aim to unravel these conditions – what can be known, what can be said, what is possible – and ultimately in which ways critical theoretical thought can contribute to challenging and surpassing them. Tina Chanter has argued that, with this reworking of the philosophical concept of aesthetics (how the world can be sensed), Rancière deliberately "radicalizes and historicizes Kant's metaphysical understanding of how the forms of space and time organize our sensory perception of the world" (Chanter 2017, 106). What is at stake, according to Rancière, is not only the conditions of knowledge but also the constitution of sensible political community in a more profound sense: what is included and what is excluded, what is visible and what is non-visible, what can be said and what is silenced? Rancière refers to this configuration of common sense as the *distribution of the sensible*. It is "a system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it" (Rancière 2013b, 7).

Furthermore, this leads to a very particular demarcation of politics in Rancière's theory. What Rancière calls distribution of the sensible, "an order of the visible and sayable" (Rancière 1999, 29), is not politics in a sense Rancière understands the concept. Instead, the distribution of the sensible has more in common with what Rancière calls the police. The concept of police, which is not to be restricted only to legal enforcement, deals with governing and other activities (such as parliamentary politics) that maintain the prevailing distribution and consensus. As opposition to police, politics reframes, re-organizes, and redistributes this order, making "visible what had no business being seen" (Rancière 1999, 30). What constitutes politics is hence an activity that creates sensorial dissensus and disagreement to the prevailing distribution of the sensible:

> Politics invent new forms of collective enunciation; it re-frames the given by inventing new ways of making sense of the sensible, new configurations between the visible and invisible. [...] Politics creates a new form, as it were, of dissensual commonsense. (Rancière 2015, 147)

In his more recent work, Rancière has increasingly attempted to think about how artistic practices "intervening in the general distribution of ways of doing and making" (Rancière 2013b, 8) participate in such configuration of what is considered common sense, even if they cannot be directly linked to Rancière's earlier notions on dissensus and disagreement as to the core of politics. However, there is a similar Kantian definition of aesthetics and critique present in Rancière's writings on art, which leads him to a detailed examination of various historical relations between art and politics, especially a particular model that he calls the aesthetic regime of art.

In general, Rancière makes a general distinction between three major regimes of art, found in the tradition of Western art. These regimes organize the "forms of visibility that disclose artistic practices, the place they occupy, what they 'do' or 'make' from the standpoint of what is common to the community" (Rancière 2013b, 8). The first one is called the ethical regime of images, in which art's relation to society "is a matter of knowing in what way images' mode of being affects the ethos, the mode of being of individuals, and communities" (Rancière 2013b,16). Here the political potentiality of art is evaluated only in terms of how it serves the political goals of a given community. Art has didactic and indoctrinates purposes to strengthen the ethos of society. The second regime, the representative regime of art, is based on hierarchy over different forms of art that establish a "clear partition between works of pure art and the ornaments made by the decorative arts" (Rancière 2013b,16). Art is considered to be a mimetic and imitational form of action and hence also a representation of prevailing social hierarchies. In the aesthetic regime of art, which is the center of Rancière's analysis, "art no longer occurs via a division of within ways of doing but is based on distinguishing a sensible mode of being" (Rancière 2013b,18).

The aesthetic regime of art emerges historically in a closer relationship with the political spirit of the French revolution and provides new ways of thinking about aesthetics as a political category; a type of politics that manifests precisely in movements such as modernism and avant-garde (see Rancière 2013b, 25, 2015, 123–41; see also Erjavec 2015; Bray 2017). Here, contrary to the other two major regimes of art, we face the problem that is crucial for Rancière and present virtually in his whole political thought: what could be the critical vocation of aesthetic experience itself beyond direct subordination to external political ideologies, to the *ethos* of a given community? According to Rancière:

> Aesthetic experience has a political effect to the extent that the loss of destination it presupposes disrupts the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations. What it produces is not rhetorical persuasion about what must be done. Nor is it framing of a collective body. It is a multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live in and the way in which they are 'equipped' to adapt to

> it. It is a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible. As such, it allows for new modes of political construction of common objects and new possibilities of collective enunciation. However, this political effect occurs under the condition of an original disjunction, an original effect, which is the suspension of any direct relationship between cause and effect. (Rancière 2009b, 72–3)

In the aesthetic regime of art, aesthetic experience has its own political modality. According to Rancière-scholar Devin Zane Shaw, politics in the aesthetic regime of art "seeks to change the sensible fabric of social relations rather than seizing institutional power" (Shaw 2016, 150). Art in the aesthetic regime is not (necessarily) attached to any external political ideology or clear political representation. Instead, the political effects of art are situated in the aesthetical redistribution of what is considered normal, visible, natural, and possible; but only in indirect ways. This is what Rancière refers to as a "founding paradox" of aesthetic regime defining art's political potentiality (see Rancière 2015, 141; see also Lampert 2017). In the aesthetic regime, "art promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy and thrives on that ambiguity" (Rancière 2015, 141). A majority of Rancière's recent work can be characterized as an attempt to mediate this paradoxical interplay and its historical variances in different forms of art (Rancière 2013a). This attempt also involves Rancière's lesser-known reading of the history of political design from the end of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, establishing "the paradoxical genealogy leading from Ruskin to the Werkbund and Bauhaus" (Rancière 2013a, 153n) that will be analyzed further in the following section.

Architecture and Design in the Aesthetic Regime of Art

In this section, I discuss in a more detailed manner the formulation of Rancière's aesthetico-political genealogy for thinking about the relationship between art and politics.[2] I focus especially on Rancière's notions regarding the emergence of modern industrial design and architecture in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. This genealogy is elaborated especially in Rancière's *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art* (2013), in which Rancière discusses design and architecture in the aesthetic regime of art from John Ruskin and William Morris to constructivism and the Bauhaus. For Rancière, this now-canonical tradition of socially engaged architecture and design (see also van Helvert 2016) should be understood in keen relation with a simultaneous aesthetic revolution in forms. Here, the critical vocation of design – its attempt to make a political difference – is intertwined with broader aesthetic emancipation: new sensorial communal existence, new perceptions, and new visions (Rancière 2017a; Rancière 2017b).[3]

Rancière begins by examining the political and social aspects of John Ruskin (1819–1900), an English reformer of applied arts, whose influence played an important role in the development of the Arts and Crafts movement, and also the work of German industrial designer Peter Behrens (1868–1940), German Werkbund (German Association of Craftsmen), and the Bauhaus. According to Rancière, Ruskin's aesthetical thinking illustrates that, for design to be critical, it needs not only to be committed but also create a certain aesthetic counterpart towards the existing society. Aesthetics is a way to mediate broader social concerns of morality and humanity. This is evident in Ruskin's suggestion that the designer's social and moral responsibility is to stand against the ugliness of early industrial production that also resulted in the decreased quality of everyday objects. Ruskin's approach was hence not limited to designing better objects in terms of quality but to think anew how these objects also participate in societal dreams and utopian aspirations for a different society. This is understood as an aesthetical reconfiguration inventing new "modes of social existence" (Rancière 2013a, 143), in which the aesthetic side of design appears as "the question of expressive supplement" that is formulated in keen interplay with the attempts to improve the material conditions of living (Rancière 2013a, 143).

In Ruskin's formula, and its later development in the work of William Morris (1834–1896) and the Arts and Crafts movement, the political aspect of the design is not primarily committed to forms of political art as such (art for the people), but instead forms of art that are aesthetically distanced from the primary conditions of living. The design of new objects and spaces for new ways of living also makes visible a new utopian vision of the world that counters the prevailing distribution of the sensible. According to Rancière, this constitutes the original "politics of social art": a designer's social responsibility is not to supply the existing social needs but instead to think beyond prevailing societal conjuncture and provide a counter-vision, an aesthetic configuration of what is considered possible (Rancière 2013a, 135).

Furthermore, Rancière compares this Ruskinian paradigm of social art to Peter Behrens, who is often characterized as the pioneer of modern industrial design. Even though it is often suggested that the emergence of modern design, as developed by Behrens, subordinates aesthetics to the logic of industrial production, when it comes to the broader conceptualization of aesthetico-political social art, that is the relationship between art and society, we see undisputed Ruskinian lineages in Behrens' work that associate the political function of new industrially produced objects, "suited to a practical need", to broader aesthetical questions concerning the ways of "inhabiting the world", understood as aesthetical or sensible revolution (Rancière 2013a, 148).

Another example of this connection between aesthetics and politics in design is present in Rancière's *The Future of the Image*, which

addresses the unexpected common ground between Behrens and French symbolist poet Stephane Mallarmé (1842–1898). What is the common ground between these two very different artists is that the potential political efficacy associated with their work is inseparable from the project of inventing new forms, symbols, and other qualities often associated with style and artistic form:

> Between Mallarmé and Behrens, between the pure poet and the functionalist engineer, there, therefore, exists this singular link: the same idea of streamlined forms and the same function attributed to these forms to define a new texture of communal existence. (Rancière 2009c, 97)

The redefinition of forms, in Mallarme's case the development of new symbolic poetry and in Behrens' case the development of the rational language of modern design, can be understood as attempts to expand artistic vocabulary towards modernist forms (see Ross 2010, 151). At the same time, however, new forms are also politically charged reactions against the previous values transmitted by the old forms. This sensible revolution is not inseparable from the ethical, social, and political function of modern design to engage with the creation of a new world. As such, it "might lead us to reassess the dominant paradigms of the modernist autonomy of art and of the relationship between art forms and life forms" (2009c, 103).

In Rancière's recent work, this paradoxical coexistence of these opposite ways to think about the social impact of design is discussed, especially with references to Russian Constructivism (Rancière 2017a, 2017b). Here a good example is artist and designer El Lissitzky (1890–1941), whose design seems to manifest the type of politically charged design understood as an interplay between the creation of new autonomous forms and their simultaneous engagement with societal demands. In particular, Lissitzky's famous collection of paintings, prints, and architectural drawings created during 1919–1927, known as the *Proun* project (translated as "project for the affirmation of the new"), offers a way to think about the relationship between these two different stances.

In *Proun*, Lissitzky simultaneously follows the formal experiments of Suprematist painters such as Kazimir Malevich to discover new conceptualizations and visualizations of artistic forms and also associates it to the political rethinking of society undertaken during the Russian revolution. Resisting, however, the straightforward Constructivist tendency to think that art should construct a new communist society in the literal sense, Lissitzky comes up with a slightly modified framing of political design that does not stress the direct link between design and new society but instead constructs "a sort of sensible landscape of communist life" (Rancière 2017b, 265). Lissitzky's project for the "affirmation of the new" was hence, first and foremost, an aesthetical exploration of possibilities embodied in new forms and examination of new visions that would resonate with

certain qualities associated with communism rather than attempting to directly engage with the construction of the party version of communism (Rancière 2017a, 609; see also Margolin 1997).

For Rancière, a similar idea is found also in the designers of Western Europe, regardless of their "submission to the principles of capitalist rationality" (Rancière 2009c, 101). Rancière maintains that, for example, the project of the Bauhaus ought to be understood as a combination between new sensorium of life and new rationalized ways of living:

> The new life announces itself as the concordance of vitality, geometric form, functionality, and technology. Not incidentally did the great revolutionary moment coincide with the great moment of the design of buildings, utensils, and posters, which was also the great moment of cubist, abstract, futurist, formalist, and constructivist experiments in art. In all those artistic, industrial, and social experiments there is a common aesthetic concern – the concern for a culture of use that would overcome the separation between the economic rationality of a production of things oriented toward the abstract production of exchange value and the artistic production of works of art destined to their own perfection. [...] In that context the same idea of form could unite the apparently diverging practices of industrial rationalization, abstract painting, functional design, new architecture, or advertising. (Rancière 2017a, 608)

New design forms introduce dissensual common sense to the prevailing distribution of the sensible "without necessarily being tied to idea of radical revolution" (Rancière 2017b, 264). The new forms and types associated with modern design are not directly political by nature, but they nevertheless can be understood as a reaction to earlier forms of living and the design of an object that also entailed the previous consideration of what is considered normal. Here the "paradigm of social art", developed especially in industrial and architectural design, appears for Rancière not only as an instrument for external political goals but also more broadly as an attempt to give a new aesthetic constitution for political communities to come. From this perspective, both design and politics are about an alteration of what is considered common in given space-time conjuncture. Redistribution of the sensible is also the process of redesigning the sensible, a constant process of renegotiating and redistributing the societal norms and forms.

Designing Dissensual Commonsense: On the Surfaces of Design

For Rancière, the consubstantiality of art and politics in the aesthetic regime of art is not based on direct and clear-cut relationships but their multiple productive tensions (Rockhill 2014, 164). Art tangles with politics by making visible something that contradicts and

reconfigures what is considered a normal state of things (Rancière 2015, 148). In this sense, Rancière asserts that the efficacy of "critical" or "political" art (words often synonymous for Rancière) is not limited to resisting the hidden ideologies that prevent us from seeing the "real world":

> art does not become critical or political by 'moving beyond itself,' or 'departing from itself,' and intervening in the 'real world.' There no 'real world' that functions as the outside of art. Instead, there is a multiplicity of folds in the sensory fabric of the common, folds in which outside and inside take on a multiplicity of shifting forms, in which the topography of what is 'in' and what is 'out' are continually criss-crossed and displaced by the aesthetics of politics and the politics of aesthetics. There is no 'real world.' Instead, there are definite configurations of what is given as our real, as the object of our perceptions and the field of our interventions. (Rancière 2015, 156)

The attempt to return to the real world and real needs is in many respects the prime story of the history of political design, including seminal works like Ken Garland's "First things first manifesto" for graphic design (1964), Wolfgang Haug's *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics* (1971), and Viktor Papanek's *Design for the Real World* (1971), addressing ethical, ecological, and humanitarian question through design (see Clarke 2013; van Helvert 2016). However, as we saw in the previous section, Rancière's approach seems to offer another historical pathway of art and design becoming critical.

Furthermore, such emphasis can be approached also from a contemporary perspective. Here a good example is a recent discussion between architectural theorist Mark Foster Gage and Rancière that addresses the question of aesthetical critique as the primary condition for politics related to architectural design. Regarding this, an important question is whether political architecture is about critical contributions towards the prevailing power structures and existing social relations, or whether it is about producing new sensorial organization and communal existence throughout the design process itself (Rancière 2019, 14). For Rancière, the dichotomy produces two contrasting critical modes of action embedded in architectural forms: one based on an idea that architecture can make one aware; and the second on broader subversion throughout architectural design itself.

As Gage paraphrases the first position during the discussion, it "is an ingrained critical theory stance within architecture that insists that political action is contingent on awareness, and that architecture can make one aware" (quoted in Rancière 2019, 16–17), present today, for example, in urban artistic interventions that aim to produce plausible political effects from above by making residents aware of their environment and its decay. Here, architecture and design are utilized to raise awareness about segregation and poverty on behalf of the

passive residents (Rancière 2019, 20–1). From this perspective, architecture needs to cause plausible political effects calculated in advance and from above rather than examining how politics is itself shaped throughout the design process itself.

However, Rancière maintains that there exists a second, more complex, subversive design strategy, based on constant reconfiguration and estrangement of the distribution of the sensible (Rancière 2019, 15–16). Here it is the (architectural) design itself that critically generates politics in the sense Rancière understands politics, from a broader aesthetical basis. Here design not only makes one aware of direct forms of social, economic, and political oppression. Instead, it is critical in a different manner, by becoming, according to Rancière, "an instrument for the reform of perception" (Rancière 2019, 18). From this perspective "architecture is not only supposed to construct units for inhabiting, but really constructing new senses of seeing, working, acting, and feeling". This is where it "meets the critical tradition and notably the concept of estrangement", understood as "freeing the object from all the mechanisms of ordinary perception" (Rancière 2019, 18).

This difference between awareness and aesthetical estrangement is crucial for Rancière and it ultimately also explains why Rancière often detaches himself from the general framework of critical theory (such as the Frankfurt School) and its implications for critical art. For Rancière, both critical art and critical theory often operate within the existing distribution of the sensible by revealing its hidden contradictions and biases: social contradictions of prevailing distribution might be revealed but they are still statements made within that distribution (Rancière 2019, 18). However, for Rancière, the inherent aesthetical emancipation present in the meaning of estrangement in the aesthetic regime of art suggests an entire departure from existing aesthetical distribution. Instead of thinking that there exists inherently critical or political artistic or design practices that can lead to the direct revelation of oppressive power relations and ideologies, design as a critical practice is to be understood here as a constant subversive, subtractive, and estranging process challenging the previous distribution of the sensible.

From this perspective, design practices, for Rancière (2019, 18), do not become critical in a sense that they "point towards social contradictions". Instead, the critique elaborated here is about "drawings and narratives about space" (Rancière 2019, 17) that can expand political imagination over the shared communal space and various political subjectivization embedded in it. Not limited to only raising awareness in the forms of political image-making, didactic agitation, or propaganda, these drawings and narratives have substantial political agency and roles in framing and deciding what is included and what is excluded by a given community. This is what Rancière has called the surface of design:

> By drawing lines, arranging words or distributing surfaces, one also designs divisions of communal space. It is the way in which, by assembling words or forms, people define not merely various forms of art, but certain configurations of what can be seen and what can be thought, certain forms of inhabiting the material world. (Rancière 2009c, 91)

Design, from clothing to urban planning, produces an idea of a shared symbolic community with forms of inclusion and exclusion and forms of normal types and abnormal types. The argument is, of course, far from unique. Recently, especially feminist and decolonial design scholarships have constantly suggested that the symbolic forms of power participate in the aesthetical constitution of unwritten hierarchies, assumptions, and prevailing political registers. Societal norms, related to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and class relations, are constructed, performed, and reinforced, among other things, by the design of objects, spaces, and user interfaces. It does not take long to find examples of gendered product language, exoticized or colonized objects, class distinctions by taste, buildings and spatial plans that are not accessible or safe to everyone equally (Schultz et al. 2018; Ehrnberger, Räsänen, and Ilstedt 2012; Isaksson et al. 2017).

Understood from this perspective, politics related to design is not limited to political oppression and exceptions but also includes what is considered to be normal and natural (see Kiem 2013). As Matt Malpass has also outlined, critical approaches in design have "defamiliarizing and estranging effect in order to dissociate the users from their normal modes of use. It is the potential of critical design to make things unfamiliar and strange that allows us to start thinking about how we might use and design objects differently" (Malpass 2017, 63). Such defamiliarizing design introduces a new sensorial display of a particular community with its shared common political conditions.[4]

From this perspective, it is perhaps possible to propose a Rancièrean approach to critical design in which what is at stake is a sensorial interpretation of the world throughout the designed object, spaces, and surfaces that contribute to "an aesthetic and political division of a shared world" (Rancière 2009c, 107). By considering design as a constant process of the way in which societal values, norms, and common places are negotiated, design not only reveals political and social contradictions and disagreement but also departs from the sensible landscape that constitutes such contradictions.

Conclusion

The emergence of critical design has brought social and political dimensions to the forefront of design studies and theory. However, critical design practices have been also criticized for being elitist, academic, and privileged (Tonkinwise 2014). Additionally, it is suggested that such an elitist position is made possible precisely due to

the language borrowed from critical theory, including, for example, the patronizing view of treating people as passive and ignorant that need to be activated by raising awareness about their oppression (Bowen 2010; Prado de O. Martins 2014). While I consider these reservations extremely important, it is additionally important to emphasize that there are multiple ways to understand critique in critical theory, especially if it is approached from a broad perspective that might also respond to such concerns.

This article has provided a slightly renewed theoretical framework by discussing the historical and theoretical grounding of critically oriented design from the point of view of Jacques Rancière's political thought. Particularly, the article has focused on Rancière's way of thinking about the aesthetic and political registers substantially intertwined in his understanding of critical art. This is present also in Rancière's discussion on the critical function of design. Rancière's definition of critical artistic practices is not limited to speaking for the passive people or revealing the real world in front of them. Consequently, what constitutes the potential "critical" element in design according to Rancière is not limited to direct revelations of social and political inequalities for passive audiences but also extends to looking at how these inequalities are constructed through different sensory experiences and how it is possible to subvert them altogether.

The purpose of this article is not to suggest that thinking through Rancière's thought would be the only plausible way to theorize design's social and political efficacy. What is primarily required is approaches that aim to surpass the primacy of theoretical position and instead deploy it as a practice in different contexts by acknowledging the design practice itself rather than subordinating it to theoretical and textual discourse (Bardzell et al. 2012, 289; Malpass 2017, 11). However, regarding the problem of moving from theory to practice, Rancière's reflection on design might give some further guidance. To paraphrase Rancière's vocabulary on critical art, what is of interest here is not to look at how new practices provide direct antagonizing tactics, but instead to look at how "they use those fragile surfaces to compose a proposition on what it is that is given to see to us and an interrogation into the power of representation" (Rancière 2015, 157).

Notes

1. Here especially Tony Fry's and Carlo DiSalvo's contributions can be taken as examples for staging more substantial connection between politically oriented design practice and political theory. Drawing especially on the work of political theorist Carl Schmitt, Fry (2011) attempts to rethink design practices not based on how design may collide with the political sphere or how it might become a useful instrument for political goals, but as an activity that can be considered inherently political for framing, deciding, and designing what is brought into being and what is excluded by a given

community. In a similar way, Carl DiSalvo's *Adversarial Design* has become an important theoretical source. By utilizing the antagonist political theory of Chantal Mouffe, DiSalvo argues that design can contest the idea of *politics* as structures of organizational governing and administration by introducing *political* practices that are understood in Mouffe's theory as resistance to organizational politics. Applying this to design theory, DiSalvo suggests that the political dimension of design lies in creating antagonistic "spaces of confrontation" (DiSalvo 2012, 5).

2. The concept of genealogy is used here in a manner associated especially with Michel Foucault's readings of the historical construction of knowledge and modes of thought. Rancière has himself stated that his method of thinking the relationship between art and politics "is no doubt my own way of translating and appropriating for my own account the genealogical thought of Foucault – his way of systematizing how things can be visible, utterable, and capable of being thought." However, Rancière also states that, compared to Foucault, he is "more sensitive to crossings-over, repetitions, or anachronisms in historical experience. […] So that where Foucault thinks in terms of limits, closure, and exclusion, I think in terms of internal division and transgression" (Rancière et al. 2000, 13; see also Rockhill 2014, 145–53).
3. The argument is of course not unique as such. In design theory especially Victor Margolin has argued that what is at stake in the avant-gardist design in Russian Constructivism and later in "German constructivism" in the Bauhaus was a struggle for utopia promoted by two interlinked revolutions: one revolutionizing the artistic practices and the definition what is art, and the second attempting to put art into the utopian building of new society (Margolin 1997, 3). For a discussion of "beauty-in-use" in design history, see also Tonkinwise (2003).
4. Here an interesting point of reference is an emerging critical design practice called norm critical design (normkritisk design), developed by critical design scholars focusing on gender (Ehrnberger, Räsänen, and Ilstedt 2012; Isaksson et al. 2017). Putting special focus to artistic work, exhibitions, and theoretical discourses, norm critical design practice examines how design displays and disciplines societal hierarchies, norms, and power relations and also critically contests them. From this perspective, norm critical approaches to design problematize "what is seen as being (ab)normal, permitted and prohibited. Further, it concerns who is considered as being 'us' and 'the others' and what expectations and characteristics that are associated with different groups such as 'women' and 'men'" (Isaksson et al. 2017, 236).

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