

## AN ANATOMY OF HOPE

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#### Abstract

*'So, it is the crisis of the idea of revolution. But behind the idea of revolution is the crisis of the idea of another world, of the possibility of, really, another organization of society, and so on. Not the crisis of the pure possibility, but the crisis of the historical possibility of something like that is caught in the facts themselves. And it is a crisis of negation because it is a crisis of a conception of negation which was a creative one.'* (Alain Badiou)

The paper seeks to elaborate on the concept of hope and the possibility of a '*politics of hope*' that goes beyond negation in relation to contemporary architectural practice. The focus will be on the affective modality of hope, the intra-personal, as opposed to the common understanding of hope as a personal feeling. Following Ernst Bloch's notion of hope as '*anticipatory consciousness*', the paper discusses the limitations and potentials of the principle of hope in contemporary spatial practices using Brecht's dictum '*something's missing*' as a starting point for thinking about hope as a cognitive instrument. In a post-modern society, the notion of an 'outside' is hardly conceivable. The alternative orders of society imagined are almost invariably mirrors of what already is; these could be called utopias of compensation. At the same time, there has over the last couple of years been a rapid increase in instances of political upheaval, and the words change and hope are heard increasingly often in political discussion, signalling a dynamism as well as an openness in political discussion that goes well beyond the ideologies of the 20th century. Hope is in other words here understood as transformative; the concept is interlinked with the prospect of change. Hope is as an operative concept capable of a double move, simultaneously being critical and propositional. The critical aspect is implicit in the connection to change; it denotes a desire for a different world than what is. The propositional aspect implies a direction and the exploration of an alternative. Hope in relation to spatial practices is thus concerned with the experimentation along the edge of the current doxai – challenging them and seeking to extend them.

*Keywords:* Politics of Hope; Bloch; Architecture; Theory; Practice

Please cite this article as: Torisson, F., An Anatomy of Hope. *plaNext* (2015), <http://dx.medra.org/10.17418/planext.2015.2vol.01>

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### Introduction

The notion of a 'politics of hope' has recently returned after a post-modern hiatus, and we no longer imagine ourselves to be at the end of history. The question is however what hope is, and what it does, in a context that is no doubt still post-modern where the idea of 'progress' remains problematic. The most popular version of a 'politics of hope' no doubt stems from the 2008 election campaign for the then-Presidential candidate Barack Obama, manifested in Shepherd Fairey's poster simply entitled 'Hope'. Interestingly enough, the poster originally bore the word 'Progress', which the Obama campaign managers changed to 'Hope' (Fisher III et al., 2012). The poster itself is arguably one of the most iconic posters of the 21st century; however, the message of the poster was never specified. The purpose appears to have been to create an association between hope and the personality of Barack Obama as a representation of change, rather than with any specific set of policies. The shallowness of the poster reduces the concept of hope to a floating signifier, one that absorbs meaning rather than emits it. Hope then becomes a device playing on emotions without content, but one that manages to produce forms of collective hope of different societal groups without having any counterpart in politics.

Talking of hope in a post-modern context is somewhat paradoxical, at least if one refers to hope for a better world. If post-modernism is characterised by the abandonment of the metanarratives of progress and Enlightenment (Lyotard, 1984), the concept of hope in the form of a 'politics of hope' becomes problematic. Without the metanarrative, hope is privatised and ultimately individual rather than collective, a process Thompson and Žižek have referred to as the '*privatization of hope*' (Thompson & Žižek, 2013). Hope in post-modern society is thus connected with personal desires rather than any collective political will. As Jayan Nayar puts it: '*The collective we of a hopeful Humanity lies succumbed to the sovereign I of individualistic desires*' (Nayar, 2013, p. 64). In post-modern society, the most hopeful institution must be the stock exchange, an institution built on and feeding off a very specific form of individual hope. Joseph Vogl posits that '*the market is neither interested in the past nor in the present but only in future profit prospects, this capital's dream is oblivion; it is about the power of future and is fulfilled in the idea of the end of history*' (Vogl, 2010, p. 4).

However, in order to discuss a 'politics of hope' it is necessary to define another form of hope. What is required is a form of hope focused on defining a collective project rather than on the individual's desires. In order to rehabilitate hope as a collective endeavour, it becomes necessary to adapt the concept to a post-modern condition in order to define a 'politics of hope' that has the potential of becoming something more than plain optimism. In the past five years, there have been spectacular political manifestations and activism around the world, from the *Indignados* in Spain to the *Occupy Movement*, to the *Arab Spring* in the Middle East. All of these have been incredibly effective in their campaign

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against the power structures that are, and they have all expressed a hope for a better world. At the same time, from the outside, the reasons for these movements beyond the negation of the existing system have been unclear. This is one of the reasons why a discussion on hope is essential: not necessarily to create some form of consensus, but to elicit a future-orientation in the political discussion, which may well be a precondition for a politics of hope.

To further complicate matters, just as there is a certain divergence of opinions as to the definition of hope, there are widely diverse definitions of what constitutes a 'politics of hope'. This has also changed radically over the past 50 years. Writing in the early 1960s, Arthur Schlesinger contrasted 'politics of hope' with 'politics of memory' and nostalgia (Schlesinger, 1963). This is a highly modern juxtaposition where hope is nearly synonymous with progress. In a contemporary context, again using the Barack Obama as an example, 'politics of hope' has been contrasted with a 'politics of cynicism'.<sup>1</sup> Possibly a more interesting juxtaposition is one between a 'politics of hope' on one hand and a 'politics of fear' on the other. It has been argued, by Lieven de Caeter for example, that we live in an age characterised to a great extent by fear (Caeter, 2004). The resurrection of a 'politics of hope' would then be an anti-thesis (again back in the dialectical) of a society dominated by a 'politics of fear'. This would however also be too simplistic as the concept of hope is elaborated to be something more than the anti-thesis of fear. Any such definition risks detaching the notion of a politics of hope from the actual and enforce its existence solely in the virtual domain of the unrealisable[LK1] as Susan McManus has pointed out (McManus, 2011).

This article will dissect the notion of hope and the conditions of hope as related to spatial production, in particular in relation to architecture as a contingent discipline and small-scale urban design of alternative public realms. The article will partly build on the theoretical framework of Susan McManus' article 'Hope, Fear, and the Politics of Affective Agency' (2011) but will elaborate on this framework in order to connect it to architecture. The selected forms of practice are not exactly from the 'outside' of the profession of architecture, but rather seeking to engage with the frames that define the limits of the domain of the profession of architects and urban designers, and to challenge these frames in an emancipatory way.

The essay will argue for an extended definition of the concept of hope as a cognitive instrument to work towards increasing potential for societal transformation. The ultimate

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<sup>1</sup> Barack Obama in a speech at Democratic National Convention on Tuesday, July 27, 2004, <http://www.librarian.net/dnc/speeches/obama.txt>

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aim for this extended concept of hope is to challenge and extend what Brian Massumi has referred to as ‘*society’s boundary conditions*’, the political, economic and scientific doxai that presently curb our understanding of the world and its possible alternatives (Massumi, 2002). The concept of hope is subsequently connected to the architectural practice through a short comparison of Umberto Eco’s “*The Poetics of the Open Work*” (Eco, 1989), which is used to analyse the potential for a politics of hope in architectural practice.

### A Theoretical Framework of Hope

*‘So, it is the crisis of the idea of revolution. But behind the idea of revolution is the crisis of the idea of another world, of the possibility of, really, another organization of society, and so on. Not the crisis of the pure possibility, but the crisis of the historical possibility of something like that is caught in the facts themselves. And it is a crisis of negation because it is a crisis of a conception of negation which was a creative one. The idea of negation is by itself a negation of newness, and that if we have the means to really negate the established order — in the moment of that sort of negation — there is the birth of the new order.’* (Alain Badiou in Houtdt, 2011, p. 234)

The crisis of the metanarrative of modernity is also the crisis of negation as a critical method of transformation as it arguably requires a belief in negation to bring society forward, ultimately, a belief in progress. The question then becomes: where is then the possibility of resistance to the dominant power structures if this resistance needs to transcend negation? Critical theories, according to Geuss, serve as guides for human action; they seek to produce enlightenment in their agents, they are inherently emancipatory, they have a cognitive content, and they are reflective rather than objectifying. *‘A critical theory (...) is a reflective theory which gives agents a kind of knowledge inherently productive of enlightenment and emancipation.’* (Geuss, 1981, p. 2). The question is if this still applies in a post-modern context. It is now often argued that negation is no longer enough (Martin, 2006; Wallenstein, 2010; Wallerstein, 1998). This is part of the motive for seeking to rehabilitate a politics of hope: to provide a position of positive transformation. An extended understanding of the politics of hope is intended to constitute a “positive critique” in the sense that it offers an alternative to what is which is not solely based on negating the existing, but also provides a direction rather than a destination.<sup>2</sup> This is a shift and not necessarily an innocent one.<sup>3</sup> The directional is one of the tools of governance in a neo-liberal world that returns in planning in urban visions that envision a society that differs very little from what society is today. However, the implications of this shift in

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<sup>2</sup> Arguably, all critique promotes a positive alternative implicitly if not explicitly, c.f. (Latour & Weibel, 2005)

<sup>3</sup> As was pointed out to me by one of the peer-reviewers.

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relation to hope have not been explored in any detail in regards to disciplines of spatial production.

The notion of a positive alternative is not necessarily simple. Most alternative societies that are proposed could still be situated as negations rather than constituting positive alternatives; for example: there are too many cars, let's build a society without cars. Alternatives are primarily aimed at alleviating the injustices of our present system instead of actually doing something else entirely, and could be categorised as alternatives of compensation. Fredric Jameson suggests that the very notion of it being radically different makes it impossible for us to imagine since this is the definition of the radically different in the first place: that we cannot imagine it (Jameson, 1995). And, in the text entitled '*The Politics of Utopia*', he argues that even if we could imagine something radically different from what is, the principal problem is that we are then unable to see a way in which this could become reality. Jameson uses as an example universal employment, which according to him is highly provocative ideal that would be the ultimate revolt against a capitalism that requires '*frontiers and perpetual expansion to sustain inner dynamic*' (Jameson, 2004, p. 38). Universal employment thus would challenge capitalism at its core. However, this is also the downfall of this idea, since it would be inconceivable in capitalism, the system would already have had to be changed for it to become possible. David Harvey makes a similar distinction in '*Spaces of Hope*' (2000), where he differentiates between utopias of spatial play (that is images of a utopian society) and utopias of social progress (political ideologies). Harvey discusses a form of 'dialectical utopianism' that would combine the two, whereas Jameson is less optimistic and suggests that this is the conundrum of politics and the concept of utopia, utopia can hence only be used to critique the dominant ideology (Jameson, 2007).

Ernst Bloch remains the foremost theorist on hope as a concept. His work '*The Principle of Hope*' (1995) is fundamentally based on hope as a form of positive critique that opens up the potentiality of the futures possible rather than prescribes one specific future. Bloch's work is a redefinition of Marx's notion of criticality into something that transcends negation. To Bloch, hope was not solely the opposite of fear, but hope is anticipatory and active; it is '*a directing act of a cognitive kind*' (p. 12). In Bloch's view, the feeling that '*Etwas fehlt*' ['Something's missing'] (Bloch, 1988, p. 14), a sentence he borrowed from Brecht is the starting point for using hope as a cognitive instrument. Hope is in other words a process of development where abstract becomes concrete. There are different forms or stages of hope, the simplest and most common of which are daydreams of compensation and personal success, often in the form of nostalgia. There is subsequently a distinction between compensation, what Bloch refers to as *abstract utopia*, and anticipation, referred to as *concrete utopia* and in Bloch's view connected to Marxism. The distinction is based on *function* rather than *content*, where concrete utopia is anticipatory and transformative, and

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the task in developing hope is ‘removal of the abstract elements which clutter up the concrete core’ (Levitas, 2011, p. 104). That is, to make hope real, the unrealistic and unconsidered aspects need to be separated from the hope itself. ‘*Docta spes, comprehended hope [begriffene Hoffnung], thus illuminates the concept of a principle in the world, a concept which will no longer leave it.*’ (Bloch, 1995, p. 7). The notion of comprehended hope locates hope, although it is a future-oriented concept, firmly in the present. ‘*That is why real venturing beyond never goes into the mere vacuum of an In-Front-of-Us, merely fanatically, merely visualizing abstractions. Instead, it grasps the New as something that is mediated in what exists and is in motion, although to be revealed the New demands the most extreme effort of will*’ (p. 4).

The dialectical is important to Bloch, but he insists that the future is an open system. While Bloch builds his principle of hope heavily on both Marx and Hegel, his view of the future is thus open and dialectical as opposed to Hegel’s Geist guiding society towards Aufhebung and Marx’s determinism where Communism is the inevitable outcome (Thompson & Žižek, 2013). This open future is made up from the potential futures, the open possibilities that come from impulses in the everyday. Bloch employs a concept he calls the *Not-Yet* (Noch-Nicht) as the principal concept that connects the present and the future, and it is central to his entire work on hope. The Not-Yet is a distinctly future-oriented concept that still remains firmly grounded in the present. Bloch’s Not-Yet is divided principally into the Not-Yet-Conscious and the Not-Yet-Become (Bloch, 1995). The Not-Yet-Conscious is the possibility of the new as developed in the unconscious of the mind. Bloch insists that the unconscious is where connections are made through associations and where the new is produced (Levitas, 2011). In Bloch’s definition, ideas are formed in the unconscious, and these ideas make their way into the actual real as impulses that can be traced in the everyday objects as well as in cultural production. There is consequently any number of possible futures being expressed at any given time, leaving the future open to follow any which one of these. These impulses are always there, their principal determinant is that they are produced by the unconscious mind and thus arise out of their present cultural context.

This anticipatory consciousness is in other words not construed around a fantasy, but is developed into a concrete possibility, and it is this possibility that is hinted at in the Not-Yet and which is later evolved. Bloch’s focus on utopia makes things complicated, but it is essential to remember that Bloch’s definition of utopia was instrumental rather than constituting an objective in itself. To Bloch, (concrete) utopia is primarily the expression of hope. Hope is developed in the unconscious, expressed in the everyday and in particular in the arts, and it is eventually developed into a concrete and conscious anticipation, one which strips away all the unrealistic and irrelevant abstractions into something which is highly concrete and possible. Yet hope must go through this process. Jameson follows a

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similar line of thought in his example above of universal employment, that the utopian becomes real possibility and no longer utopian as the result of a process; the image in itself is abstract, and in order to make it concrete the process in which it becomes anticipation must be experienced, hope must evolve from abstract to concrete (Jameson, 2004). The open question is how this evolution of hope is possible if there is only a very abstract image what is a collective and collective hope, and it is here that architecture as cognitive devices find their role.

A politics of hope in architectural practice will thus not engage with filling in a pre-specified model of a better society but will seek to imagine this better society through an architecture that enables thinking along these lines. Architecture then becomes a kind of cognitive device, enabling and encouraging contemplation beyond the confines of the doxai that we inhabit.

Affect is a concept closely related to the concept of hope. The definition of affect used here stems from the work of Spinoza as interpreted by Brian Massumi, Eric Shouse and Nigel Thrift, among others (Massumi, 2002; Shouse, 2005; Thrift, 2007). To locate affect, Shouse makes a distinction between 'affect', which is intrapersonal and 'feeling', which is the personal perception of affect, which is conditioned by cultural background and memories (Shouse, 2005). This relationship would not be complete without 'emotion', which is the culturally conditioned expression communicated in gestures and language of the feeling directed back at the rest of the world. Human bodies are, according to Spinoza, always affecting and being affected, by other humans or by situations or material objects (Massumi, 2002; McManus, 2011). To Spinoza, affect is a transition, and this transition is '*accompanied by a feeling of the change in capacity*' (Massumi, 2002), and it is this notion of capacities that defines what a body is, what it can do. Feeling then is the reaction to this affect as it is passed through the 'filter' of our unconscious and our memories, which means that the feeling produced by affect varies from subject to subject.

To Massumi, affect is closely interlinked with the concept of hope, in fact, he uses them synonymous, and goes on to define affect as '*the virtual co-presence of potentials*' (Massumi, 2002). This co-presence is virtually present; it cannot be reached and actualised in that sense, at least not directly and literally. Ernst Bloch put it, you will not be able to point out that which was missing and exclaim: '*it's about the sausage*' (Bloch, 1988, p. 14). The '*vague sense of potential*' is in other words perpetually out of reach, through experimentation more potential can be accessed, and this constitutes a degree of our freedom in a sense. Massumi, like Bloch, understands hope thus as a directional affect, which does not prescribe a future but rather open the possibility of something that will begin to approach what is missing (Massumi, 2002).

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Affect and affect theory is predominantly used in marketing, what Massumi refers to as 'relational marketing' (Massumi, 2002), through fundamentally affecting the subject on an affective level, bypassing the conscious mind so to speak. Maurizio Lazzarato has referred to this as noo-power and noo-politics (Lazzarato, 2006). Noo-politics, summed up by Deborah Hauptmann, operate as '*a power exerted over the life of the mind, including perception, attention and memory*' (Hauptmann, 2010, p. 11) — as opposed to Foucault's concept of bio-politics, which is instead exerted over the life of the body. However, the concept of noo-politics does not replace the concept of bio-politics; according to Lazzarato, it is superimposed on top of it, and ultimately commands it (Lazzarato, 2006). Building on Deleuze's essay 'Control Societies' (Deleuze, 1995), Lazzarato suggests that noo-politics reorganises and commands other power relations as it is more deterritorialised and more virtual than bio-politics (Lazzarato, 2006). Sven-Olov Wallenstein suggests that our minds are 'sculpted' through architecture and visual media in general in order to produce certain actions and reaction (Wallenstein, 2010). The objective of such exercises is to fundamentally shape the mind of the subject through shaping its identity, to in-form us as Massumi puts it (Massumi, 2002). This is according to Massumi how power functions now: it is not power over subjects, but power to form subjects. According to McManus, '*the affective can be theorized as an extensive series, or field of forces and intensities that the "I", the subject, finds itself manifest within and negotiates*' (McManus, 2011). The territory of affect is consequently a battleground in this sense, where hope-affect constitutes one form of resistance to the sculpting of the mind by the control society, and hope is intended as a means to break out of the confines of the dominant doxai.

### Expressions of hope

*'Utopia is no longer the invention and defence of a specific floorplan, but rather the story of all the arguments about how Utopia should be constructed in the first place. It is no longer the exhibit of a an achieved Utopian construct, but rather the story of its production and of the very process of construction as such'* – Fredric Jameson (2007, p. 217)

The vast majority of architectural production serves to manifest the dominant ideology in society, to physically manifest laws and power structures in the material reality, and an architectural practice of hope will invariably constitute exceptional practice that poses a challenge in one form or other to the standard practice. However, this does not necessarily render it meaningless, as such practices provide examples of ways of doing things differently, and open for discussion on how the world could be different.

What is referred to here as architectural 'politics of hope' is in essence similar to David Harvey's notion of dialectical utopianism, combining 'utopias of spatial play' with 'utopias of social process'; this also would constitute a practice that is both processual and directional, rather than providing a finite future, of making the unreachable reachable (Harvey,



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2000). However, there is an added element to this: the notion of affect and affective architecture, which is central to how architecture could work as ‘politics of hope’ in a processual way. One principal reason for this addition is the central role that affect plays in hope and the evolution of hope, but also how affect is used to various ends in architecture. Perhaps the most illustrative example is the use of fear-affect, where security measures are added in order to create a sense of security, but effectively contribute to an affect of insecurity, mistrust and fear. These phenomena have been analysed in the works of Wendy Brown and Anna Minton, among others (McManus, 2011; Brown, 2010; Minton, 2012). Although it is not desirable to juxtapose hope-affect and fear-affect, as Susan McManus maintains, it nonetheless shows how the potential of using affect in the built environment is consciously or unconsciously employed in the cities today (McManus, 2011). Normally, however, these affects tend to appeal to negative affects, such as fear, techno-positivism or nostalgia. All of these have a clear role in the economy as it is produced and reproduced in the built environment today.

In this brief study of a possible ‘politics of hope’ in architectural production, I will outline two somewhat different approaches to the architectural project – limited in scope and commission to the framework of production of the architect – working with or without a commission from the established modes of production. Both of these are concerned with challenging the doxai of common knowledge and the equations that govern the production of architecture. This challenge can be made in various ways, as will be shown, but the central part is that the architectural project serves as a cognitive instrument working towards learning how things actually could be different.

Architectural production is, with few exceptions, based on a market-driven equation that determines whether a project will probably be feasible (profitable) or unfeasible. What architectural politics of hope primarily do is to challenge how architecture is habitually quantified, and to what end. It is in other words a form of critical practice that proposes societal transformation by challenging the frameworks that control the production of architecture where architecture is the physical manifestation of law and power structures. There is however also an affective dimension in this, and it is the hope-affect that proposes a transformational potential and that permits the challenge to frameworks in the form of architecture to be taken up and developed in a process towards a realistic utopia, a concrete anticipation of another world. It is a form of practice that requires a *partial alignment* with the power structures of society, while challenging these at the same time.<sup>4</sup> Challenging the frameworks defining feasibility and economic legitimacy

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<sup>4</sup> I believe that the term stems from Keller Easterling, but I have been unable to locate a reference.

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that control the production of architecture is in itself not a revolution, but it is a beginning to enable thinking beyond the forces that seek to maintain the status quo and who seek to assert that no other world is possible.

The type of practices of hope outlined here is characterised by its indeterminate rather than determinate nature; it is a type of ‘crowd-sourced utopianism’. Politics of hope refers to evolutionary practice that starts with an opportunity – an ‘in-between’ – and exploits it in a manner that is different from the workings of society at large. The structure and telos of this practice is not set at the beginning, but has evolved through participatory discussions and trial-and-error. The format, system and telos are perpetually renegotiated and thus also perpetually deferred. Consequently, the evolution, as contrasted with intelligent design or similar, moves in a general direction rather than towards one specific type of society. These are interesting from an architect’s perspective, as they appear to form a site of resistance, operating socially responsibly in a way that transcends or transgresses the frame within which architectural production habitually takes place. In other words, by operating through such participatory utopian projects, an architect can become less dependent on client and capital. The idea is that such projects will produce and test propositions for a better world beyond the confines of capitalist production. Again, it is necessary to consider these endeavours as a kind of representation if they are intended to have an effect beyond themselves.

### **The virtual co-presence of potentials in architecture**

*‘Perhaps we can see whether any of the new forms we have imagined might secretly correspond to new modes of life emerging even partially. Perhaps indeed we might start to do this at the existential level, at the level of daily life, asking ourselves whether we can think of spaces that demand new kinds or types of living that demand new kinds of space’ (Jameson, 1995)*

This text will focus on a narrow segment of small-scale architectural practices using two contemporary practices as the objects of analysis. These objects are selected because they operate on the edge of what is considered the conventional framework of architectural production, partly as a result of their scale. The short analysis here is primarily using architects’ statements and published photographic material, which is useful to establish a hypothesis although the next step would be a more rigorous analysis of how the projects have been received.

As their focus is on small-scale interventions and projects, there is a certain agency available in the sense that there is an opportunity to act otherwise, and this window of opportunity has a tendency to diminish when more money is involved in the production of the architecture. If hope is communicated through affect and through what could

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be referred to as cognitive devices, the next issue is to relate to how this is mediated within architectural practice and form. One theoretical starting point that dovetails with the notion of hope is the concept of the 'open work'. This was originally introduced by Umberto Eco in the essay *The Poetics of the Open Work*, and translated into English in the late 1980s. The open work is juxtaposed with the closed work, and the two are related to how the work (of art) is experienced and interpreted. It is in other words the relationship between the object of art and the observer (reader, and in our case, user), which is in focus rather than the intention of the artist. This does not mean that the artist is inconsequential; on the contrary, the artist introduces the openness of interpretation that is a significant part of the poetic qualities of the open work.

The essential quality of the open work is that it offers an open number of interpretations – there is no definitive interpretation or even definitive set of interpretations, but instead a plethora of interpretations that encourage or demand contemplation on the behalf of the observer. As an example, Eco uses the literature of Kafka, where there is no legend or key to understanding the metaphors, but rather the metaphors' openness is what keeps our attention and begs the question what it possibly could mean (Eco, 1989, p. 9). The work's open qualities render it a field of possibilities rather than a linear sequence. Eco furthermore offers a subcategory to the open work which is the 'work in movement', which consists of 'unplanned or physically incomplete structural units' (p. 12). Both the open work as a defined field of undefined possibilities and the open work as a field that is developed during the performance of the work (Eco uses Scambi by Henri Pousseur as an example of this kind of work; in Scambi, the performer is presented with a number of sequences of music, but the order of these is decided on by the performer rather than the composer). The distinction is, in other words, between a work that is static or one which is to some extent dynamic.

Architecture in relation to hope can be read through Eco's open work. One could readily argue that our conceptions or pre-interpretations of architecture are socially produced, meaning that our possible interpretations are severely limited by the interpretational frameworks defined by the dominant ideology. An architecture of hope in this case is an architecture that seeks to break out of architecture as closed work; the objective is maximum opening, so to speak. In this context, the open work in architecture is an attempt to break out of the confines of the contemporary doxai, to go beyond the social conditions that are assumed to be 'natural'. Both the examples here explored can be related to the open work, but in different ways.

The first example is ECObox. The project was initiated in Paris, La Chapelle in 2001 by the group aaa (atelier d'architecture autogerée) consisting of architects, artists, and other professionals. It is intended to be a self-managed space, or rather, a network of self-ma-

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naged spaces. The form is a garden, intended to serve as a catalyst for community building and participation. On the one hand, it is critical, in that it questions the standard procedure of community participation in architectural projects that otherwise tend to be democratic Potemkin villages where projects gain democratic legitimacy but reap little input from the community. It is at the same time propositional, as it is a means to propose an alternative, or, more precisely, to continuously generate alternatives: *'functioning as social and cultural space, both utopian and real, nomadic and multiple, through a continual process of fabrication and self-redefinition according to its users' desires'* (Petrescu, 2005, p. 43). Theoretically, the project builds heavily on Deleuze and Guattari and the concept of micropolitics, as opposed to macropolitics. It is a highly processual project, the central aspect of which is the community-building process rather than the garden itself. The architectural approach is curatorial, which in this case means that the architect (in both a literal and figurative meaning) engages in bringing things together, enabling and then surrendering control of the process. The result is described as *'a bricolage project from an assemblage of desires'* which prioritises the act of deterritorialization (presumably of capitalist segmentarity) over the construction of new institutions of power (46). The project is thus a device for the evolution and expression of participants' desires – a heuristic tool for imagining alternatives rather than providing an alternative in itself. In the terms of Michel de Certeau, it is a project that works with *tactics* rather than *strategies* (Certeau, 2002). It is a tool for working towards a different form of subjectivation, in line with Guattari's transversal thinking. In other words, it is a space that continuously redefines itself according to its users and actively strives to avoid crystallising in any fixed form, but to instead remain dynamic in a kind of intellectual nomadic form. To an extent, it calls to mind Bourriaud's relational art, but in the city, but there are, as will be discussed, certain differences (Bourriaud, Pleasance, Woods, & Copeland, 2002).

The space produced in ECObox can be considered curated rather than architect-designed. When taken in its most basic function, *curation* is an activity of selecting, organising and sorting. In this case, the curatorial aspect aims to spark a process that will subsequently become self-governing in that nobody will be in control (Petrescu, 2007). One aim is to provide a space for re-thinking the ideas of individuals and the collective and to define an identity which has not (yet) been colonised by capitalist interests – in extension, a space to pause and think freely. In the art world, the participatory turn is perhaps best summarised by Nicolas Bourriaud in 'Relational Aesthetics' (2002), where he takes a very similar approach. Bourriaud writes of *'microtopias'* that emerge from relational art where the social situation is the artwork rather than the artefact. Simply put, the artist/curator sets a scene which is then host to an event. However, as soon as the artwork becomes a purportedly neutral and situated proposition, its power as representation becomes complex and often questionable. ECObox manages, partly, to avoid this conundrum as its script and location

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changes over time. ECObox's structure is more flexible, and as long as the question of representation remains unresolved, the problem of what the proposition's function can be avoided.

The telos is thus always-already Not-Yet – there cannot be any explicit telos. It could instead be described as a structure constructed on hope (for the possibility of imagining a more emancipatory society). In theory, the redefinitions of the telos are produced collectively by the participants: *'Collective thinking should construct itself along with the events'* (Petrescu, 2005, p. 55). The question that remains is what directions the imagination can possibly take, and to what extent it is defined by the outside.

ECObox is in terms of Eco's open work an open work in more than one sense. Eco defines a subcategory of the open work which is the 'work in movement', a work which is being reshaped by its performance within the framework provided by the artist.<sup>5</sup> The open work and the work in movement are distinguished through that the work in movement is reconfigured through its performance rather than solely through the interpretation of the audience/observer. In terms ECObox, the 'open work' and its subcategory the 'work in movement' become pertinent. ECObox consists of a curatorial structure which is filled with content by its performers (who are also its users/audience). How the content evolves is loosely controlled by the curatorial structure, but cannot be predicted through this. Consequently, the interpretation of this work by its users transforms the content of the work (if not the curatorial structure, which would appear to remain static). There is in other words a feedback loop where the content is evolving in a very simple sense through the construction of collectives and how the participants are affected through both this constructed collective and its activity or form generated, in this case the development of the garden that is the physical manifestation of the work. The central notion is not so much the object produced but the collective subjectivity, the social affect produced through the group engaging with the project.

ECObox is thus a work continuously changed through its reinterpretation and cultivating new collectives in addition to plants. The project's perpetually incomplete character breeds a form of perpetual motion to continue improving, challenging and tinkering. The produced affective result is the notion of possibility, the sense that the borders and limitations that normally apply are not applicable in this particular case.

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<sup>5</sup> It is a matter of interpretation as to whether the work in movement is actually transforming (which a direct reading of Eco would suggest), or whether it is instead a matter of re-interpreting the static work from different angles, as Claire Bishop has suggested (although she does not distinguish between the open work and the work in movement as Eco appears to do.)(Bishop, 2004)).

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The second example of what could be considered a politics of hope in architecture is a small and on the surface insignificant project that forms part of the French architectural practice Lacaton Vassal's work. The project here described is a small (14 units) new-build social housing project in Mulhouse from 2005, but similar principles apply in most of their other projects, including the much-published *Tour Bois-le-Prêtre* in Paris, which is a refurbishment of a social housing tower from the post-war period. The founding principle of Lacaton Vassal is that the primary job of the architect is to provide as much space as possible while adhering to the constraints of each individual architectural project. This approach is summed up in the principle 'PLUS', or more, where the ambition with each project is to provide twice the amount of space specified by design frameworks, budget and design brief. In terms of social housing, the relationship between design frameworks, budget and brief is often integral, aiming to provide a minimum existence, whereby the objective is to provide a low standard at a low cost. The design frameworks often dictate minimal spatial requirements that are subsequently interpreted into the budget. Together, these form the framework to which the architect has to relate. The architects here instead seek to double the amount of space provided while remaining within the original budget, simply put: twice the space for the same price (Druot, Lacaton, & Vassal, 2007, p. 17). There is an implicit critique in this approach of the system that focuses on making barely adequate housing for those who cannot afford private housing, but there is also another, propositional dimension that links the project to a politics of hope.

The commission in Mulhouse was to construct 14 minimal social housing units. Doubling the space of these means saving money on materials and work, leading to ready-made solutions and construction systems. It also leads to a different type of residence, where the extra spaces are deliberately made as something 'other' than what is habitually associated with the contemporary dwelling, in the case of Mulhouse, much of the extra space is made up of winter gardens on the upper floor. Winter gardens here have several virtues, not only are green houses a highly industrialised – and therefore cheap solution – for the additional space, it is also typologically apart from the spatial programme of the home. The extra space is in other words comprised of spaces that are to a degree less programmed than most spaces in the contemporary home.

To summarise, there is one framework of the production of spaces imposed by the minimum existence prescribed in design frameworks, but in addition to this, there our imaginary framework: the habitual definition and conception of what a home is. To a degree, this is formed by media and companies like IKEA. As an example, the IKEA catalogue has sections that programmatically define a home into functions like 'kitchen', 'bedroom' and so on, which serve to define our image of what a home is. According to the architectural historian Adrian Forty, this prescriptive shift has been an on-going process since the early days of industrialisation and the birth of industrial design (Forty, 1986).

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The room for interpretation is drastically limited by the preconceptions of what the home is, but what the rather humble extra space does is to offer a space that does not yet have a specific programme. In other words the spaces are open to interpretation, to be appropriated and inhabited in ways that are not socially prescribed. They are spaces without a specific script attached to them; in that sense, it is a critique which is not only a negation of the existing, but which aims to open doors to other imaginaries, for the users to imagine and re-imagine what their dwelling is.

It is useful to make a distinction between Umberto Eco's definition of a closed work and an open work. Transfigured to the spaces of the dwelling, it would imply that the winter gardens and other non-prescribed spaces constitute open architecture (Eco, 1989), where one can see, as Reinhold Martin once put it, how 'it might work otherwise' – a form of realistic utopia (Martin, 2006). This is in some sense a departure from Eco's focus on multiple meanings and moves from poetics to politics. One could argue that the extra spaces supplementing what is assumed to be a home constitute 'a field of possibilities', a space that is open to interpretation simply because it is outside of or in addition to all of the spaces that the frameworks of spatial production associate with the dwelling. In this case, it is not a mere case, but of spaces which are '*brought to their conclusion by the performer [in this case the inhabitant –FT] at the same time as he experiences them on an aesthetic plane*' (Eco, 1989, p. 3), thus producing the possibility of and encouraging '*acts of conscious freedom*' (p. 4), which become '*stimulus to quicken his [the inhabitant in the case of Lacaton Vassal's architecture] imagination*' (p. 7) – or, in terms of hope, a cognitive device to think beyond the confines of contemporary order. It is here a question of an unwritten openness that permits interpretation and reinterpretation. The inhabitant is not only a consumer, but in an active relation with the material (space), demanding some form of action.

One could also in this case suggest that the Lacaton Vassal housing makes use of a form of affective openness in the architecture, where the decidedly unfinished and 'raw' quality of the material structure invites reinterpretation and re-thinking of how the spaces are used and furnished. However, this is a somewhat risky argument that makes a foray into aesthetics where the various interpretations of what housing is and where 'completeness' is a decidedly factor depending on cultural context. On the other hand, one can find some support for the explicitly unfinished being connected to a conscious project of continued exploration, where continued appropriation and redefinition is part of the tactics (Andreas Ruby in Druot et al., 2007, p. 21). Even if this is the intention of the architect, it remains an open question.

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This is a theoretical starting point for thinking hope in architectural practice. This means that what has been analysed here is a framework for conceiving hope, how effective this framework has been; what it has actually produced in terms of hope is not the subject of this article. ECObox has many common denominators with the notion of relational art, which has come under criticism from among others Claire Bishop for its conviviality in the sense that the relational art projects tend to attract a socially homogenous audience that would have no difficulty forming a collective under normal circumstances (Bishop, 2004). However, this is beyond the scope of this essay, which focuses on the possible practices of hope in architecture.

Hope is in both cases expressed through an explicit incompleteness, an invitation not to complete but to push forward. Both projects described here aim to open doors to other imaginaries, to break out of the confines imposed by the dominant ideologies. The means to do so differ somewhat. ECObox is first and foremost about process and collectives, to produce the affect of possibility, which is then collectively developed into something 'other' than how inhabitants habitually relate to each other in an urban area. In this way, ECObox has very much the character of the work in movement, with an added twist that the way the work progresses transforms the work itself. The only static part in this network is the curatorial structure behind the project itself, by never crystallising into a fixed form, the project hopes to avoid producing power-relations. This structure is a very conscious engagement with Deleuze's ideas stating that desire precedes power (Deleuze, 2007), and ECObox is grappling with establishing and developing desire rather than power structures (as the title of Doina Petrescu's text 'Losing Control, Keeping Desire' suggests (Petrescu, 2005)). The extent to which it is successful would be the subject of another study.

The practice of Lacaton Vassal on the other hand is concerned with providing space for the users' further interpretation. In that sense, it is also an open work that provides what is associated with the dwelling, formally and commercially, and provides something more than this, which quite literally opens a space beyond the conventional. The user defines and completes this space in a different sense than in ECObox; the focus is less on the processual creation and definition of a collective and more about employing the extra space as a cognitive device. Both projects are characterised by an emphasis on the notion that the world is not complete, and both seek to engage with this incompleteness in a several ways. This is both a very prosaic literal incompleteness as well as a more refined invitation to contemplate and re-contemplate Brecht's old dictum: *Etwas fehlt*, something's missing. Here perhaps is the beginning of an architectural politics of hope.



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