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RE-MAPPING TERRITORIES OF ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE:

CEDRIC PRICE AND THE PROCEDURES OF SOCIAL ACTION

A Thesis in

Architecture

by

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Abstract

Historical and theoretical experience has made the challenges of socially affirmative work through architecture evident. A number of approaches have been proposed to overcome the control mechanisms inherent in the built environment which inhibit the free use of space. Recently, the concepts of program and agency have been exploited to promote the possibility of socially transformative action through architectural practice. These are best exemplified by the work of Cedric Price, who utilized notions of program as a changeable entity. Price envisioned an architectural product which, aided by computational knowledge and through communication networks, promoted social interaction and enhanced users’ capacity to act independently within the structure of society. Price’s idea of program is based on the model of a living organism that is capable of maintaining its integrity while growing and changing with time.

The current scholarship on Price has placed his work in its professional, social, and cultural milieus, and established it as a precedent for contemporary diagrammatic and network-based practices. Price’s work has been frequently cited as an example of architecture which, guided by performance and social needs and driven by ethical concerns, critically embraces the context. However, this scholarship overlooks Cedric Price’s implementation of architectural program aided by computational knowledge and his use of communication networks as a vehicle of agency.

This thesis derives and labels three previously unidentified notions of program present in Price’s work and argues that he developed them in order to overcome the control mechanisms enforced by buildings on users. These notions of program are: program as an interface (architecture that interacts with users); as a memory device (architecture that learns from experience); and as an evolutionary diagram (architecture that evolves with time).
From the 1960s through the 1980s Price’s work evolved in dialogue with cybernetics, an emerging model of computational knowledge; new computational programming techniques; and communication networks. These strategies advanced from the level of the architectural object to the level of the city. By closely examining his Fun Palace (1961-74), Generator (1976-79, 1989-90) and Japan Net (1985-86) projects, this thesis delineates ways for socially progressive, political work through architectural practice to be pursued in a time of digital social media and advanced software.

Keywords:

Cedric Price, agency, procedures of social action, program, space and social control, temporality, city as network
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Chapter 1. Introduction

Our own era...seems to be that of space.

Michael Foucault

Cedric Price (1934-2003), a maverick British architect, made his initial impact on architectural production in the 1960s.¹ Multiple threads of his influence could be traced to/or in the work of other architects in subsequent decades. As both an informal mentor and a teacher, Price had a unique role within the London avant-garde. Though never formally affiliated with any group or school, Price maintained a critical position, the implications of which are still relevant today.ii This thesis, in attempting to uncover the wider implications of his work, will focus less on the technological procedures he employed, such as the use of cybernetics, than on his theoretical position, which exploits the political as the basis for architectural work.²

Ethically driven, Price’s work gained prominence in the 1960s, a time which was “poised between a heroic period of modernist purity, and the contemporary technologically and aesthetically ‘impure,’ postmodern world of architectural signs, signification, and historical self-awareness.”³ In this transitional period, an array of possibilities in practicing architecture began to appear, which focused not only on the political nature of the space,iii but also the “technological discourse [that] had identified the dawning of a ‘postindustrial society,’ [by which] sociologists recognized the birth of a ‘leisure society,’ and economists declared the

² Felicity D. Scott, Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics after Modernism (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 15-16. "Political" is understood in terms of: "Architecture is political. Full stop. Not political in the party sense of the term, but political in the original sense of the word in that it affects the lives of citizens." (In Jeremy Till, Architecture Depends (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 106.) Note to the reader, in order to facilitate better understanding of the text endnotes (marked with roman numerals) provide a broader elaboration of the ideas and footnotes (marked with Arabic numerals), give basic reference information.
beginning of the ‘consumer society.’”⁴ Price’s work belonged to an architectural context that included groups like Archigram, whose design production often displayed technological exuberance that resulted in work of compelling visual imagery. The effectiveness of Price’s and Archigram’s approach to instigate social transformation is open to discussion, however: “If these strategies will not solve the deeper social and political urban problems, at least they open up new alternative routes for thinking about consumer society and urbanism.”⁵ By situating Price’s oeuvre between agency, program, and computation this thesis hopes to offer “a measure for accountability ... [for a] discipline [that] might open out onto alternative, democratic futures.”⁶ Price’s architectural approach was formulated in the tide of questioning the modernist legacy. To an extent, it responds to the crisis of modernism that followed the call of Reyner Banham for a more inclusive and substantive appropriation of technology.⁷

The triumph of the modernist aesthetic coincided with the postwar era’s massive reconstruction efforts. It seemed that architecture’s professed commitment to public service and social change could have finally materialized. Unfortunately, faced with the existence of mass housing units that obviated much of the meaning architecture can bring to the city,⁸ the wider public questioned architects’ design competence and aesthetic values. By the time of the early 1980s and the second edition of Reyner Banham’s Theory and Design in the First Machine, modern architecture was “finally in disrepute.”⁹

The legacy of the historical avant-gardes and the effects of their socially affirmative work through architecture were subjects of scrutiny by Marxist historiographers. Most notably,

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⁶ Scott, Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics after Modernism (2010), 36.
⁸ Here I refer to the massive housing units which have promoted the new character of urban morphology, which doesn’t exploit the patterns of the conventional urban street. One typical example would be Pruitt Igoe, by Minoru Yamasaki.
synthesized in the work of Manfredo Tafuri, this view promoted the understanding that architecture’s critical orientation toward social process is destined to fail; eventually this perception influenced larger architectural community to see history and theory as likely vehicles for fulfilling the discipline’s critical potential. However, “critical practice [emphasis added]” does not come as a simple and straightforward result of “critical theory [emphasis added].” In that sense, agency has gained much currency recently. Following that logic, this thesis restates the question: Which inherently architectural mechanisms the field can employ in order to fulfill its critical potential and transformative effect? In response, program is promoted as a tool of agency, for architects and users alike. This thesis explores Price’s idiosyncratic approach to the architectural program. However, the investigative orientation of this study does not provide definite answers; nor it is intended to do so. What it hopes to achieve is a delineation of maps of possibilities, and the necessity of interpreting architecture as the “dreams of a better world to come.”

Program “fuels people’s desire to build …. In effect, under the right conditions, architectural programs can themselves work as forces for social and political change [emphasis added].” Program describes the spatial relations and organization of human movement:

What is an architectural program? On surface it is simply a list of spaces denoting specific rooms and outdoor spaces, with a gross size for each, sometimes a few key relationships between them, and an overall budget for the project. Some programs are very sophisticated and describe activity patterns, requirements, or performance

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Scott, Architecture or Techno‐Utopia: Politics after Modernism (2010), 12.
specifications. But, fundamentally, an architectural program, even a very simple one, is a social-physical form [emphasis added].

By establishing the logic of spatial structure, programs can also perpetuate a number of control mechanisms that express conservative social agendas; in the words of Lebbeus Woods, “Design is a means of controlling human behavior, and maintaining this control into the future.”

Program, by establishing the logic of movement and use of space, produces:

A pattern [which] is a system of forces—social, political, economic, and so forth—that results in a recurring spatial relationship. Whenever we speak of a building type, let us say a supermarket, the name we use is shorthand for a cluster of pattern that give the building its fundamental identity.

This pattern is seen as restrictive to uninhibited human action in space. Price aimed to overcome those control mechanisms by utilizing changeable and evolving architecture, through his vision of architecture as an interactive process of “programming.” More significantly, in the work of Cedric Price architecture functions as a malleable system, known for:

its insistence on performance and interaction as fundamental expressions of human subjectivity ... [and ] seems to anticipate contemporary forms of production that focus on performance itself as an end product.

Price’s ideas on program developed in conversation with the rapid technological innovations of the 1960s—cybernetics in particular, whose implementation would eventually lead to a new concept of spatial organization. Marshall McLuhan’s theorization of

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15 Ibid., 149.
17 Silverstein and Jacobsen (1980): 151-152.
19 Price formulated his own triad of Doubt, Delight and Change. Price’s triad could be interpreted as a reaction to Vitruvius’s triad of firmitas, utilitas and venustas.
communication media was applicable to the new challenges set for the architecture as a field.\textsuperscript{20} It testifies to profoundly different notions of reality, inviting architecture to respond to the new condition of “materiality,”\textsuperscript{21} characterized by the impact of telecommunication systems. Innovative communication networks offered another significant model for rethinking architectural artifacts in their own right. Instead of limiting the role of an architect to the manipulation of form, architecture was increasingly understood as a process, redefining the architect’s role as the designer of that process. The notion of identity was also under constant revision as new media redefined ideas of proximity and relativity of distance. However, the question remains whether exploitations of these concepts potentially lead to further alienation or render architecture irrelevant, if not obsolete. New technologies actually guide us to question the necessity of the unmediated human encounter, and how to foster it.

The question itself and the case study chosen— the work of Cedric Price— are timely at this point when architectural production is, to a great extent, interested in creating idiosyncratic formal language. This thesis considers Price’s work as a part of a wider effort to understand the ethical implications of architectural practice, in a triangle between agency, program and computational tools and communication networks.

Price’s work has been a subject of recent scholarly scrutiny. It has been analyzed in relationship to various contexts that influenced his professional attitude or the character of his architectural work.\textsuperscript{v} These writings mostly follow well-established art historical models. Price’s design schemes have also been analyzed in relationship to a number of current theoretical concerns, such as the use of diagram or network practices.\textsuperscript{vi} Recently, Price’s oeuvre has received extensive attention as a model of architectural practice and architecture that is

\textsuperscript{20} McLuhan coined the term global village, but is widely cited for the epigram medium is the message. See Neil Spiller, \textit{Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Cyber Era}.
\textsuperscript{21} See Antoine Picon, \textit{Digital Culture in Architecture: An Introduction for Design Professions}. (Basel: Birkhaeser, 2010.)
predominantly driven by ethical concerns. However, this scholarship overlooks Cedric Price’s implementation of architectural program and his use of communication networks as tools for fostering direct human encounters, and enhancing users’ agency. Though Price’s architecture poses a significant evaluative challenge due to its very indeterminate character, revisiting and rereading its implications provides new insight on agency in architecture. Price’s work utilized notions of program in order to develop an architectural product that, aided by computational knowledge, and through communication networks, promoted social interaction. The concepts of program and agency have been exploited to advance the possibility of socially transformative action through architectural practice.

Those procedures were developed over several decades, and are exemplified by his Fun Palace (1961-1974), Generator (1976-79, 1989-90) and Japan Net (1985-86). All three projects establish an interactive loop with the user, defining a mutually dependent relationship with the context, and promoting direct human interaction. They rely heavily on technology, for instance cybernetics and communication networks, applying its formal protocols and absorbing its logic. Price’s idea of architecture is one of an anonymous formal language that moves beyond figurative and representational narratives and has the simple aim of securing a dignified human existence. The question this thesis seeks to respond to is how he intended to achieve this and to what extent he was successful in doing so. I argue that he did succeed conceptually, if not literally, in facilitating users’ agency through a strategic approach to the program as interface, memory device and “evolutionary” diagram.

Chapter two, “Imperatives of Architecture: Agency and the Promise of Architecture’s Social Performance,” focuses on the question how architecture can produce socially
transformative and critical effects. It discusses agency in architecture, how that theoretical framework gained its prominence, and how it is interpreted by current theoretical discourse. By mapping the possibilities of socially affirmative action through architecture, and pointing out its challenges, it follows one possible trajectory of the architectural practice which originated in the eighteenth century and was predominantly marked by wider social and ethical concerns that culminated in early twentieth century. Program is introduced as a likely locus for socially committed action, in comparison to other architectural devices. The tensions within Marxist historiography’s elaboration of the legacy of modernist avant-gardes, which proclaimed a profoundly disillusioned view of architecture’s capacity to instigate transformative processes in society, is also examined.

Chapter three, “Discourse(s) on Program,” surveys historical and contemporary discussions on the notion of program. Program is analyzed for its relationship to brief and form. Program’s relationship to brief is further problematized: program simplified as brief only perpetuates mechanisms which inhibit free use of space. Program is also revisited for its potential to establish the logic which generates the form. This chapter analyses the approach to program by Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi, which derives, at least partially, from that of Price. Koolhaas’s and Tschumi’s way of practicing program fail to utilize the program’s potentiality in its implementation. This capacity for agency in Price’s understanding of program comes from the role and importance of the user. Also, the chapter points out various theoretical explications of program in the 1960s, as well as the reasons why these are considered relevant for contemporary architectural discourse. The chapter argues for a new approach to program, as a computational “living” entity that is exemplified in the work of Cedric Price.

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22 Under critical effect is the effect which doesn’t conform or appease to socially established use of free time and leisure for instance.
Chapter four presents a more synthetic overview of the notion of program in the work of Cedric Price than has been given. The notions of program—interface, memory device and evolutionary diagram— are introduced, and examined in relationship to definitions of cybernetics, eventually promoting the idea of program as an organism.

Chapters five, six and seven will present Fun Palace, Generator and Japan Net, as projects in which Price’s ideas of program and architecture developed progressively and were implemented with varying degree of success. These projects developed from the architectural object to the level of the city, exploiting the logic of computation but also underlying the necessity of direct human interaction in public space (especially in the case of Japan Net). I will explore the projects for the characteristics of their architecture and situate them in relationship to the professional, social, and cultural contexts from which they emerged. More importantly, I will describe the use and implementation of cybernetics which, I will argue, enabled Price’s comprehension of program as an organism that is able to interact with the environment, learn from experience, and change with time.

Chapter five analyzes the Fun Palace in terms of three attributes of program, and especially in relationship to the computational procedures employed. Fun Palace formed a set of ideas, which Price further developed in a number of other schemes: above all, it introduced program as an interactive mechanism in relationship with the user, which records human experiences and evolves with context. Chapter six examines Generator, which marked a decisive turn in the notion of program in the work of Cedric Price. It indicates the possibility of program as something that not only interacts with the user, but learns from that experience and develops a form of intelligence in its own right. Chapter seven presents Japan Net, which exploits the power of communication networks, and explicitly points out the necessity for architecture to promote the quality public space as a framework for unmediated human interaction.
The conclusion summarizes previous insights and restates the question this thesis poses:

*How can control mechanisms the enforced by buildings on users be overcome?* The answer could be through the architectural device of program which utilizes the power of communication networks and computational knowledge, promoting digitally driven architectures. In answering that question, this thesis will map possible means of giving agency to users through the architectural device of program by building on the experience of Cedric Price’s design, and eventually promote the strategies of indefinitely reconfigurable buildings, perceiving architecture as a communication network which fosters direct human interaction. Through literature review, formal and contextual analysis of the projects, and analysis of relevant archival materials, this thesis derives and labels three substantive attributes of program present in Price’s work, to present a more comprehensive understanding of his oeuvre; situating his work in the context of the broader theoretical discussions on program, primarily presented through the work of John Summerson, Reyner Banham, Anthony Vidler and Alberto Pérez-Gómez.

23 “Digitally-driven architecture implies, therefore, not only digitally-designed and fabricated architecture, it also implies architecture—built form—that can be controlled, actuated, and animated by digital means.” (Henriette Bier and Terry Knight, Editorial introduction. “Digitally Driven Architecture.” Footprint 6 (2010): 1., http://www.footprintjournal.org/issues/show/digitally-driven-architecture, accessed on October 11, 2010.)

24 Through the consultation of the archival material and a visit to the Canadian Center for Architecture, Cedric Price Archive my attention was drawn to several documents which lead me to understand the nature of program in the work of Cedric Price in a new light. In the case of Fun Palace closer readings of the document on Biological Models pointed out program’s evolutionary nature and not only its changeable character. Also, the Fun Palace Project Report gave an overview of the design process and intent, and possibilities of the new ways of writing a brief. In the case of Generator, two paper drafts by John Frazer and others—“Intelligent physical Three-dimensional Modeling Systems” and “A Conceptual Seeing Technique for Architectural Design”—testified to the continuity of an idea and new programming techniques applied. In the case of Japan Net, closer readings of the competition boards, as well as their comparative analysis in relation to the Competition Brief, Explanatory text by Cedric Price and Gordon Pask and sketches done by Pask, helped me situate Price’s understanding of architecture and program in the context of not only computational knowledge, but communication networks as well, underlying architecture as system that fosters unmediated human interaction in public space.
The work of Cedric Price maps a number of trajectories for contemporary architectural discourse. Usually cited for its prescient character, it questioned ways of practice and conventional models of space through the concepts of indefinitely reconfigurable buildings and the consequent application of advanced models of computational knowledge. (Gordon Pask noted: “Just as a functionally interpreted building constitutes a system, so also the construction of this building is a system.” (In Gordon Pask, “The Architectural relevance of Cybernetics,” in Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era, ed. by Neil Spiller (London: Phaidon, 2002), 78. Originally published in Architectural Design, 1969.) Price’s work is illustrative of an approach to architecture that goes beyond social critique and sees it in terms of utopian goals and ideals. It ascribes to architecture the capacity to ask questions of broader political and social significance, and in doing so open up a rupture for change. The efforts of Cedric Price, misread by some as an attempt to define architecture “without stylistic preoccupations,” (In Neil Spiller, Review of From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price, by Stanley Mathews. Journal of Architecture 14, no. 4, 539.) is actually an effort to articulate space as a set or relations. In other words: “In order to define a space, the nature of the elements...has no importance; the only thing that matters is the situation between the elements, which is to say the topological structure of their grouping...Space is distribution [emphasis added].” (In Larry Busbea, Topologies: The Urban Utopia in France, 1960-1970 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 143.)

A number of anecdotes are usually tied to the work of Cedric Price. Often cited as the only licensed architect who was also a member of National Institute of Demolition Contractors, Price was also successful in arguing that architect should receive a financial compensation for advising a client not to build. This polarity marked the rest of his professional carrier. See Rowan Wilken, “Calculated Uncertainty: Computers, Chance Encounters, and “Community” in the Work of Cedric Price”, Transformations 14 (2007),http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_14/article_04.shtml (accessed on September 1, 2010) and Stanley Matthews. “Potteries Thinkbelt: An Architecture of Calculated Uncertainty,” http://people.hws.edy/mathews/potteries_thinkbelt.htm, (accessed December 12th 2009).

The 1960s and 1970s were a period of a fervid and intense intellectual debate and a time when a body of knowledge later usually referred to as “theory” started to emerge. (See the introduction to Architecture Theory Since 1968, edited by K. Michael Hays (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.).) This reaction to the evident crisis of modernism vacillated between the wholehearted embrace of technology, which led to the application of systems research and cybernetics, to intense preoccupations with formal language, obsessively responding to the crisis from “within” the discipline’s most palpable attribute. (See: Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966.) and Peter Eisenman, The Formal Basis of Modern Architecture. Facsimile edition (Baden, Switzerland: L. Müller, 2006.).)

Tschumi summarizes architecture’s relationship to power: “Historical analysis has generally supported the view that the role of the architect is to project on the ground the images of social institutions, translating the economic or political structure of society into buildings or groups of buildings. Hence architecture was, first and foremost, the adaptation of space to the existing socioeconomic structure.” (in Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction (1994), 5.)

Stanley Mathews’s dissertation on the Fun Palace and Potteries Thinkbelt, later published as a book From Agitprop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price, offers extensive coverage of Price’s personal and professional biography, intertwining it with the detailed chronology of both projects. Mathews makes a significant effort to explain the reasons why the Fun Palace failed, and also discusses the impact of ideas initiated by Price’s architecture on the formation of other professional agendas. Mathews ties different contextual developments with various notions of Price’s schemes. Mathews explored this same line of inquiry through several articles (“The Fun Palace as Virtual Architecture,” “Cedric Price: From the ‘Brain Drain’ to the ‘Knowledge Economy’”).

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4 Tschumi summarizes architecture’s relationship to power: “Historical analysis has generally supported the view that the role of the architect is to project on the ground the images of social institutions, translating the economic or political structure of society into buildings or groups of buildings. Hence architecture was, first and foremost, the adaptation of space to the existing socioeconomic structure.” (in Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction (1994), 5.)

5 Stanley Mathews’s dissertation on the Fun Palace and Potteries Thinkbelt, later published as a book From Agitprop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price, offers extensive coverage of Price’s personal and professional biography, intertwining it with the detailed chronology of both projects. Mathews makes a significant effort to explain the reasons why the Fun Palace failed, and also discusses the impact of ideas initiated by Price’s architecture on the formation of other professional agendas. Mathews ties different contextual developments with various notions of Price’s schemes. Mathews explored this same line of inquiry through several articles (“The Fun Palace as Virtual Architecture,” “Cedric Price: From the ‘Brain Drain’ to the ‘Knowledge Economy’”).
Additionally, a number of theses and dissertations have been written on different aspects of Price’s work: Molly Wright Steenson has written a master thesis entitled The Architect, The Sketch and The Response: Constructing and Construing of Cedric Price’s Generator at Yale, Gonçalo Furtado’s dissertation entitled Envisioning an Evolving Architecture: The Encounters of Gordon Pask, Cedric Price and John Frazer at UCL Bartlett, covered Generator and Japnet focusing on collaboration between Frazer, Pask and Price. Gonçalo Furtado’s dissertation gives due attention to the models of computational knowledge and their possible applicability to the field of architecture, by historically surveying encounters between Frazer, Pask and Price. Also, Furtado has published a book on Generator, which follows the conceptual model of his dissertation. Both dissertations are predominantly monographic in character. A PhD thesis entitled The Concept of Micropolitics in the work of Cedric Price 1961-1984 by Tanja Herdt is underway at Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule.

Also, Price’s work has been subject of several other publications, Samantha Hardingham’s Cedric Price Opera being the most comprehensive. In 1984, an exhibition catalog has been published accompanying the show Price had at the Architectural Association. Both publications are widely accessible, and together with Re:CP by Hans Ulrich Obrist they form common points of departure for everyone who is interested in the work of Cedric Price.

vi A number of articles deal with Price’s work, one of the most notable by Mary Lou Lobsinger. In “Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance: Cedric Price’s Fun Palace,” she uses the theoretical framework of the diagram to explicate the use of cybernetics procedures in the projects like Fun Palace. Mark Wigley in Network Practices writes on the Fun Palace in the article “Architectural Brain,” where he reads Price’s work as a possible model of practice and architecture as an “incubator” of social networks.

vii Pierre Vittorio Aureli has published in Log an article entitled “Labor and Architecture: Revisiting Cedric Price’s Potteries Thinkbelt” where he discusses the Potteries Thinkbelt in relationship to the nature of human work in terms of definitions provided by Hannah Arendt. Aureli sees the Potteries Thinkbelt as scaffolding which is capable of accommodating “[human] creativity” beyond the “authority which is imposed by buildings.” (in Pier Vittorio Aureli, “Labor and Architecture: Revisiting Cedric Price’s Potteries Thinkbelt,” Log (2011): 110.)

viii Programmatic indeterminacy was one the lasting legacies of Price’s work (as per Stanley Mathews), and generally his approach to program, certainly found its reverberations in the work of Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi. However, it is not the intention of this thesis to decipher between historical influences Price may or may have not exorted on the work of both Tschumi and Koolhaas, but more importantly to show the latent potential of more decisive grounding of architecture in user orientation and understanding of program.

ix In this thesis I will speak in favor of the ethical basis of our profession and discipline, for “architecture [which] engages the inhabitant as a true participant, unlike the remote spectator of the modernist work of art or the consumer of fashionable buildings-cum-images.” (Alberto Pérez-Gómez, Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 4)). Price’s legacy is at the intersection of politics, technology and ethics. In other words, “architecture is inextricably linked to politics, and our world is already brutally and falsely unified through technological mediation” (Pérez-Gómez (2006), 142.)
Chapter 2. On the Imperatives of Architecture:
Agency and the Promise of Architecture’s Social Performance

_I think that it can never be inherent in the structure of things to guarantee the exercise of freedom. The guarantee of freedom is freedom._

Michael Foucault

The question that will guide this chapter is how to achieve socially transformative action through architecture. This question is examined for its historical origins, as well as in relationship to contemporary architectural discourse. More specifically, the theoretical framework of agency is positioned in relationship to Marxist historiography’s evaluation of the effect of the historical avant-gardes. Summarizing that historical and theoretical experience in relationship to the problem of socially affirmative action in architecture, a number of architectural approaches are reevaluated. I conclude by proposing a new look at Cedric Price’s work and postulating program as a likely place for the initiation of social action through architectural design.

Architecture’s relationship with power is an established one: its emblematic character is suitable tool for a visually expression of domination and political influence. However, to reduce architecture’s role to the mere emanation of power structures would be erroneous. This chapter examines the potential of architecture to critically influence social processes by surveying the means and ends of the field’s critical orientation; by critical orientation, I mean the relevance of the experience of the historical avant-gardes.

I will examine the evolution of the parts of architectural practice from the socialist utopian projects of the early nineteenth century to the modern movement in the twentieth century.

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In this trajectory, the promise of social betterment gave way to eventual cynicism and disillusionment in the postmodern period. In light of recent pursuits of idiosyncratic formal language, this thesis renders the question “... [If the architectural] ... professional courage ... [could be only] ... translated into structural “virtuosity” of surfaces,” both timely and appropriate.

If architecture is to be something more than an image-driven commodity, it must provide understanding of the world that adds value beyond its aesthetic value. If the architect is to contribute to the human community, to act politically comes as an imperative. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the potential in ethically exploiting the political basis of architecture. However, the nature of “ethical action is always singular and circumstantial.” Driven by the call to perform ethically, and cognizant of the world that is “already brutally and falsely unified through technological mediation,” the work of Cedric Price offers an insight in the potential of engaging technology to address critically social and cultural ordering of the urban condition. To a degree, Price’s approach to design overcame the failures of modernism. This chapter will elucidate the broad theoretical framework for Price’s critical practice, which is anchored in an understanding of program.

26 The role and prominence the political can play in contemporary discourse seems to be intensively compromised by the failure of modernism to bring a genuine change to the pressing social and urban issues.
28 According to Alberto Pérez-Gómez, architectural artifacts have been increasingly perceived as commodified fetishes of style and social prestige, where the effectiveness of design is gauged by “the number of tourists that stop to photograph ... innovative buildings [emphasis added].” (In Alberto Pérez-Gómez, Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 138.)
31 Ibid., 142.
2.1. Modernist Avant-gardes and the Legacy of Marxist Historiography

Alberto Pérez-Gómez argues that the architect is most intimately concerned with the pursuit of beauty, however it is also “architecture’s imperative to provide a better place for society.” Since the eighteenth century, the field of architecture has undergone a radical transformation—in technological advancement, and also in the perception of its role in shaping the structure and ordering of society. The time of the Enlightenment formulated the notion of architecture and architectural practice as something which necessarily bears “the stamp of social morality.”

The nineteenth century was a time when architecture’s progressive social orientation came to fruition. However, modernist historiography has predominantly interpreted that period as a time of (mis)-use of history. Looking beyond the excesses of formal languages and their inappropriateness to content, the chief legacy of the nineteenth century consists of the establishment of a mental map of the profession’s ethics, most notably in the work of John Ruskin and William Morris. The nineteenth century posed the seminal question of how to do architecture ethically in the service of the public as a whole, and specifically in the service of social groups which by that time were mainly outside of the usual agenda of architectural practice. Following that trail, the early twentieth century would witness not only a new formal repertoire, but also new models of practice in response to the potential and limitations of mechanization and new methods of production. The call to fulfill the task of social responsibility

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33 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
found resonance not only in different notions of architectural practice, but in various forms of architecture itself. Tafuri specifies:

The formation of the architect as an ideologist of society, the individualization of the areas of intervention proper to city planning; the persuasive role of form in regard to the public and the self-critical role of form in regard to its own problems of development; the interrelationship and opposition— at the level of formal research— between architectural “object” and urban organization: these are the constantly recurrent themes of the “Enlightenment dialectic” on architecture.37

The heroic period of the Modernist Movement (1915-1929) was driven in part by the call to deliver socially relevant and ameliorative work. The basic procedures of the architectural profession were rethought in order to accommodate the newfound potential that industrial production opened for a number of fields of human activity, including architecture. From the open plan to different systems of prefabrication, the implications of mechanized procedures were applied to architecture in the hope of using them to fulfill its proclaimed social goal and political relevance.

In parallel development to modernism’s changing roles and orientations,38 different models of historiography were formulated. In particular, Marxist critiques provided insight into architecture’s possibilities in relation to the imperatives of architecture’s social performance. Presenting his understanding of avant-garde practices, Tafuri points out: “The higher the sublimation of the conflicts on a formal plane, the more hidden the cultural and social structures actually expressed by that sublimation.”38 What Tafuri finds particularly problematic is the treatment of the city as the work of art, which in his view obfuscates the simple fact that the modern metropolis is part of the cycle of capitalist production and reproduction.39 Tafuri sees the production base of the city as a trap by which architecture is only absorbed, but oddly enough has to evade.

38 Ibid., 2.
39 What Tafuri’s critique successfully evades was the 1970s emerging condition of post-fordism.
Understanding that architectural practice is limited in its capacity to work against the system by which it is conditioned, Tafuri questioned history as a seemingly objective account of the field’s past, and read it in terms of a continuously developing narrative which could deconstruct diverse power mechanisms. In his analysis of the avant-garde practices, Tafuri deciphers two models of its relationship with the metropolitan condition: one which seeks order and one which melancholically reflects the past. These conceptualizations of the avant-garde move between “Chaos” and “Order,” between rationalized on the one side, and dreamlike motivation on the other, between intrinsically “objective” and inherently “subjective”. The predicament of the avant-garde is how to cope with the apparent disorder of the metropolitan condition, which is reproduced in rhythmic cycles. Tafuri’s notion of the “death of architecture” logically implies the death of the notion of an architect: “Once true unity of the production cycle has been identified in the city, the only task the architect can have is to organize that cycle.”

Tafuri also disqualifies any possibility of the neo-avant-garde in an open and uncompromising attack on autonomy. His translation of Hegelian and Benjaminian ideas understands the “end of architecture” in relation to the new condition of urbanity. According to Tafuri, this urban condition will eventually lay a foundation for rethinking the institution of architecture itself; the role of an architect had radically shifted towards process-based instead of object-oriented thinking. Ultimately, Tafuri’s position is best articulated through the words of

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41 Ibid., 146.
44 Ibid., 135.
Frederic Jameson: “An architecture of the future will be concretely and practically possible only when the future has arrived, that is to say, after a total social revolution.”45

Tafuri’s meditation on both the nature of architecture and its history came as a reaction to the historic avant-garde’s many futile attempts to produce “sustainable democratic social institutions.”46 Tafuri’s approach not only opened new pathways for architectural criticism, but also offered compelling arguments on the impossibility of socially transformative effect through built architecture, and on the impossibility of the politically progressive action through architectural practice.

In contrast to Tafuri’s evident pessimism stands the work of Meyer Schapiro, which is closely examined by Felicity Scott. Marxist historiography produced a mode of analysis which takes into account not only the formal attributes and spatial arrangements of architecture, but also their relationships to the social and cultural conditions which are both formative and illustrative of that same architecture. Essentially, Schapiro recovers “architecture’s radical political potentials—that is to say—its optimism [emphasis added].”47

Schapiro’s thought stands in sharp contrast to the Tafurian tradition of Marxist historiography, though both are intensely anchored in the methods of the Marxist tradition itself. Unlike Tafuri, Schapiro still sees architecture’s potential for social imaginativeness, where by providing a decidedly other image of the future, architecture can mobilize different layers of social structure for action and activism. More importantly, some of his relevant writings on this issue were released as a reaction to the Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson’s exhibition at the Museum of Modern Arts in New York in 1932, which introduced the new tradition of the historic European avant-garde to the American professional and wider general public as a new

47 Ibid., 8.
formal language, voided of any socially charged content. As is well known, Hitchcock and Johnson presented modernism as a new “style”; it was not a radically different approach to architecture.

In his essay “The New Architecture,” Schapiro points out:

The buildings are more than a design of spectacles; they are a social program and a necessary part of society. The intentions of the most advanced architects imply a social revolution, even when the architects themselves are conservative or ignorant of basic facts. In claiming the social relevance of building, in affirming in projects and books the public responsibilities of the architect and the need for communal enterprise, these bolder architects anticipate the style of a Socialist Republic. In a field dominated by traditional, wasteful procedures, by sentimentality, by class pretension in the aping of old aristocracies, they have created a method which is insistently technical, unsentimental, and alive to everyday human needs... We can understand why its enemies have called the new architecture the “Trojan horse of Bolshevism” and why it is the favored art of Soviet planners.48

Though Schapiro nurtures a more optimistic view than Tafuri, he still remains skeptical on the possibility of social change through architecture per se. In assessing Mumford’s The Culture of Cities, he noted:

It is especially consoling to those who find capitalism intolerable, but the overthrow of capitalism equally unpleasant. He assures them that capitalism is dying and that the new society is already growing up in the form of garden cities, suburbs, new houses and superior streamline machines, the very things by which middle class measures its own well-being. The field of revolution lies for him in the fixtures of society, rather than in class relationships.49

Scott summarizes: “With architecture intimately tied both to commercialism and to the power relations of an industrial society, the discipline’s utopian or progressive potential could only, Schapiro believed, be realized on the level of revolutionary praxis.”50

50 Scott, Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics after Modernism (2010), 18.
Eventually, Schapiro acknowledges how artistic playfulness can lead to unleashing expressive qualities of the work of art, despite being divorced from social concerns.\textsuperscript{51} It seems that Schapiro successfully evades two traps: the one of reducing architecture to a set of aesthetic principles, and the other of reading it as a sole emanation of the social and cultural context. This position is to a some extent concordant with “Le Corbusier’s [view] that a revolution had already taken place in the domain of construction … [promoting] … architecture as an alternative means of, or simply an alternative to, revolutionary social change.”\textsuperscript{52} Schapiro would conclude that: “In spite of the exaggerations and errors of Wright in giving architecture an independent role in shaping social life, the experience of the profession has a vital bearing on socialism.”\textsuperscript{53} If architecture indeed cannot change the world, at least in service of that aim it has the tool of imagination at its disposal, and its transformative potential remains to be exploited.

In summary, the prime legacy of Tafurian Marxist historiography is a profoundly pessimistic view of what architecture can do critically vis-à-vis social structures.\textsuperscript{54} Out of that insight the consequent eminence of history and theory of architecture as vehicles of criticality was proclaimed. Isabelle Doucet and Kenny Cupers write:

In the wake of the problematisation of modernism, the discipline of architecture has witnessed a marked turn in its understanding of this ability. The potential of architecture to be engaged and thus critical of the existing, was no longer to be located in the affirmative realm of the architectural project, but shifted with Tafuri — under the influence of the various schools of Marxism and critical theory — to the realm of history and theory. Whether asserting architecture’s socio-economic determination, or promoting its autonomy, the arguments were founded upon one central inclination: the preference for theory as the ultimate guide for criticality in architecture.

\textsuperscript{52} Scott, \textit{Architecture or Techno-Utopia: Politics after Modernism} (2010), 18.
\textsuperscript{54} The postwar crisis of modernist design language, which included its apparent ineffectiveness to add value to urban territory (See Reinhold Martin, “Financial Imaginaries: Toward a Philosophy of the City,” \textit{Grey Room} 42 (Winter 2011): 60-79.), provoked a number of responses within the discipline: affirmation of form, typology, contextualism etc.
Over the past decade, this paradigm has been called into question. With the demise of ‘big schools’ of thought, the idea of a Theory that would directly guide architectural practice has lost its appeal. What has become known as the ‘crisis of theory’ can be brought back to the awareness that critical theory does not automatically lead to a form of critical practice. While in US architectural culture the rejection of theory as the preferred locus of criticality has been expressed most vocally by advocates of so-called ‘post-critical’ or ‘projective’ approach,’ there has actually been a more general emergence of proposals for an alternative to the reign of critical theory. These range from neo-Marxist derivates of the old critical theory now turning towards critical practice, to those reclaiming agency of the architectural object against the decades-long influence of the social sciences in architectural production. 55

Though Marxist historiography has shown the impasse of socially transformative work through architecture, 56 Tschumi has pointed out to viable alternatives to ‘[being] conservative, that is, ... “conserve[ing]” our historical role as translators of, and form-givers to the political and economic priorities of existing society.”

We [architects] could function as critics and commentators, acting as intellectuals who reveal the contradictions of society through writings of other forms of practice, sometimes outlining possible courses of actions, along with their strengths and limitations. Finally, we could act as revolutionaries by using our environmental knowledge (meaning understanding of cities and the mechanisms of architecture) in order to be part of professional forces trying to arrive at new social and urban structures. 57

Building on that premise, the following section of this chapter will introduce the concept of agency, as a valid theoretical framework which buttresses that kind of practice. Doucet and Cupers, by assessing different notions of critical, reaffirm agency as an inherent attribute of the architectural work:

Architecture is, by its very nature ‘in the world’, in both spatial and temporal terms: buildings are concrete and tangible elements of our every life-world. Yet, also architectural design, urban plans, utopian schemes or paper architecture are ‘in the world’: they might not define the ways things work, but they do change the way we think how they work, or should work. It is this peculiar, myriad being-in-the-worldness

57 Ibid.
of architecture that raises fundamental questions about *how architecture enacts, how it performs, and consequently, how it might ‘act otherwise’ or lead to other possible futures* [emphasis added]. This possibility underlines all questions regarding architecture’s ability to be critical. Agency can be understood as the very vehicle of such *drive* or intention to create alternative worlds. 58

They acknowledge architecture’s projective quality, which is in return grounded in a particular spatial and temporal milieu. Architecture has an unparalleled capacity to explicate possible futures and by doing so, it constitutes and reshapes the present. How this is achieved *through* architecture and *by* architectural means remains the question which will motivate this study.

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2.2. Agency and the Potential of Socially Transformative Work through Architecture

We need to find an alternative to our drawing board obsession with fixed forms, and it seems that we have to think in terms of language—of a vocabulary or syntax.

John Frazer\textsuperscript{59}

The previous section showed the challenges of socially affirmative work through architecture and introduced the concept of agency as a viable alternative path for achieving socially transformative ends through architectural practice. This section will establish links between architects’ and users’ agency. Ana Paula Baltazar and Silke Kapp have implemented the definitions of agency by Anthony Giddens,\textsuperscript{xv} and understand it to be:

neither submission to nor mediation between others ... Agency means a practice opposed to social determinism, which implies subjective capacities and objective conditions ... In an ideal social engagement, agency would develop into a collectively created process of social transformation.\textsuperscript{60}

Agency could be discussed in following terms:

What is the nature of the logical connection between action and power? ... to be able to ‘act otherwise’ means being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs. This presumes that to be an agent means to be able to deploy (chronically, in the flow of daily life) a range of causal powers including that of influencing those deployed by others. Action depends upon the capability of the individual to ‘make a difference’ to a preexisting state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to ‘make difference’, that is, to exercise some sort of power.\textsuperscript{61}


In an attempt to articulate the applicability of the concept of agency for the field of architecture, Baltazar and Kapp have summarized architecture’s relationship to power in three models: “a Renaissance-Modern scheme, a participatory-mediated scheme and the scheme of autonomy.” In the first scheme, the architect acts as an articulator of new physical reality in accordance with the “established power,” which “may include practical or symbolic functions for the general population, but it systematically contributes to suppress people’s political agency [emphasis added].”

In the second, which Baltazar and Kapp call the “participatory-mediated model” scheme, the architect still retains full control of the process, but allows users to intervene in the various stages of design and with different capacities. Though they consider this significantly more acceptable ethically than the first model, it still perpetuates the socially predefined idea of the institution; in other words, “agency may be shared by more people than in the previous scheme only if institutions and architects in charge allow it to be.”

Finally, in the third scheme, “mediation is no longer of the architect, but a set of interfaces,” where “agency happens as a joint interrelationship and not as the sole responsibility of people (either architect or users), interfaces or finished spaces, and also that the boundaries between these agents need to be clear so as not to lead to manipulation.” Eventually, they engage people in their archaic everyday production of space. In those terms, this thesis will reaffirm the idea of the program as a way to “implement” agency. To advocate the program as a vital part of the process of conceptualizing, thinking, and making architecture is to speak in favor of architecture as a socially contingent and socially meditated practice. This view of the program has the potential not only to engage social conditions, and a capacity to render not only the way

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62 Baltazar and Kapp (2010), 133.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 134.
65 Ibid., 135.
66 Ibid., 138.
social processes as they are, or are emerging; it also has unparalleled capacity to say how they can be. In other words:

The architect can assume ... a role in activating agencies within and across political, social and economic borders. Considering the border itself as ‘agency’, as a space traversed by flows and informal actions, architects and planners can propose a logic of subversion and penetration of borders and boundaries by local, global and architectural actions and policies.  

Following that call, “architecture [will not be considered as an] object, in which the visual presence often overwhelms critical thought, but rather ... architecture as agency [emphasis added].” This is an idea which demands, in Jeremy Till’s view:

a reformulation of aspects of practice: a move from the idea of architect as expert problem-solver to that of architect as citizen sense-maker, a move from a reliance on the impulsive imagination of the lone genius to that of the collaborative ethical imagination; from clinging to notions of total control to a relaxed acceptance of letting go.

In the following section I will examine a number of possibilities which were proposed as likely architectural vehicles of agency.

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67 Kossak, Petrescu, Schneider, Tyszczuk and Walker (2010), 17.
69 Ibid., 151.
2.3. Architectural Approaches and Agency

The previous section has demonstrated the validity of the theoretical framework of agency vis-à-vis the possibility of socially transformative action through architecture. The following paragraphs will examine different architectural approaches in line with that conclusion. The expression of architectural intent is evident through the use of materials, tectonics, form, or program. Building on the experience of historical and contemporary precedents, I will show the advantages and shortcomings of the particular approaches.

The idea that architectural materials and construction methods could serve as instruments of change was prominent in the logic of brutalism, where “scarcity and manpower played an important role in architects’ choice of materials: brick and béton brut.”70 In the article “Autarky and Material Contingencies in Italian Architectural Debate (1936-1954)” by Pep Avilés, the role of material and its use in pre- and post- World War II Italian architecture has been traced and situated in the wider political and social context. Avilés examines the material attributes of architecture in relation to the pre-war political orientation of the autarky, which aimed at building an economically self-sufficient social structure. According to Avilés, the social and cultural scarcity of the pre-war years were used to formulate an “austere” formal language, which in the years after World War II was used as an embodiment of the progressive social forces. However, Avilés points out the limitations of that approach: “Material considerations are never enough for a full comprehension and critique of historical moments.”71

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Many authors, most notably Kenneth Frampton, have understood tectonics as a likely architectural tool of “resistance” to the pervasive forces of commodification. Gevork Hartoonian, in the article “Theatrical Tectonics: The Mediating Agent for Contesting Practice,” also proposes tectonics as a place where architectural intent and transformative meet. However, Hartoonian underlines the limitations of that approach, as well. He specifically points to the work of Zaha Hadid and her Phaeno Science Center, underscoring the graphic design quality inherent to her work, which in his view unfortunately masquerades as a weak excuse for a more comprehensive and structurally sane approach. Hartoonian claims: “The current public esteem for architecture has little to do with the tectonic,” and concludes that “in an attempt to reach that which is architectural, the tectonic facilitates architecture’s entanglement with the constructive structures of capitalism.” Hartoonian indeed offers a valid alternative; however, this alternative seems to lack a firm and resilient base, as shown in Hartoonian’s analyses of Phaeno Center and of the Casa Musica by the Office of Metropolitan Architecture. According to Hartoonian, the tectonic approach remains susceptible to the image-driven culture of consumer society.

Another possible architectural vehicle of agency is that of an aesthetics that is grounded in users’ everyday experience and stands close to the vernacular. Sebastian Haumann, in “Vernacular Architecture as Self-Determination: Venturi, Scott Brown and the Controversy over Philadelphia’s Crosstown Expressway, 1967-1973,” points out that the choice of a particular aesthetic language can promote agency in architecture. Haumann underlines Venturi and Scott Brown’s appropriation of urban planning theories about uninhibited human action in space and their application to architectural form. Eventually, these design approaches could lead to

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74 Ibid.
ambiguous results. This article discusses Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown’s South Street Project for Philadelphia. In this case:

the architects acted as political stakeholders, whose expertise carried weight, not merely as specialists for design commissioned by politicians, investors or, for that matter, citizens’ initiatives, but in positioning themselves in relation to other actors the way they thought would best fit their own goals and convictions— with mixed results [emphasis added].75

Later development and the excesses of the post-modern years proved the limitation of this approach. The seemingly user-oriented choice of formal design language was in fact a mere stage set of revived historical styles and formalist modes of operation. Rather than enhancing architecture’s lost potential for communication, the trend merely exploited historical references as ready-made and ready-to-use formulas.

While other expressions of architectural action— use of materials, tectonics, or vernacular aesthetics— can be applied with varying degrees of success to architectural projects with a social focus, this thesis will test, attest, and contest another architectural tool— that of program. Many have argued that architecture has a capacity to produce events, and through that capacity architecture affects the social condition. Price work embodies this set of concerns by reaffirming the problem of program. Price’s architecture aims not to merely reflect on context, but to generate that context. Price’s work offers a historical precedent that successfully ties together: technology, commitment to program and a socially grounded ethic. Price’s architectural approach was facilitated by use of cybernetics. However, this thesis aims not to revive certain models of knowledge, meaning it does “not [seek] to recuperate them for the

present (indeed they are of different historical moment),”⁷⁶ but to show the social potential inherent in thinking of architecture differently.

Standing near to, yet opposed to the notions of program that fail to fully appreciate its socially affirmative potential, Price’s legacy gives a possible model for practicing architecture as a more ethically committed practice. It testifies to an architectural approach that is both critical and human-centered, and weds “the term agency [which] stands for the capacity objectively to initiate causal chain,”⁷⁷ and the architectural program as the likely place for that kind of action.

The troubled nature of the relationship between power and architecture were discussed in this chapter. It has been pointed out that there is a viable theoretical framework for a critical relationship to power and control mechanisms in space. Even more so, within the work of Cedric Price there is a promising model of architecture and architectural practice, the full critical potential of which remains to be utilized.

The initial decades of the nineteenth century were marked to some degree by experimental efforts motivated by utopian visions of the future, eventually provoking a number of threads which later architectural discourse would continue to follow. These initiatives came as reactions to urban conditions generated by the Industrial Revolution; they were not limited to political reform, but to some extent saw urban strategy as a tool of reform itself. (See Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture: A Critical History and Nathaniel Coleman, ed., Imaging and Making the World: Reconsidering Architecture and Utopia.) The changing nature of the experience of the metropolis, as well as the shift in the production base of the city, gave a new mandate to “architecture” to respond to those challenges one way or another. Highly developed urban plans and proposals were intended to provide a network of public amenities, improved housing conditions and effective infrastructural systems. More importantly, their underlying premise was that projected urban order would produce peaceful social development.

Creation of the self-sustainable, “utopian” communities came as an important concern. The socially progressive visions of Charles Fourier promoted the establishment of ideal “phalanxes,” with phalansteres as places for habitation. Situated in the open landscape, mostly reliant on agriculture and some forms of industrial production, they found their formal precedence in the Palace of Versailles. Looking beyond the particularities of the design schemes, this body of work can be read in terms of integration of the landscape, urban form and modes of production. Drawing much of its ideological persuasiveness from the scientific socialism of Saint-Simon, the schemes and plans of utopian socialists, though mostly unrealized, at least offered something more than a pastoral meditation on the socially harmonious future. Eventually, these projects were capable of revealing both the transformative potential as well as inherent conflicts in the constitution of the urban environment. (See Malcolm Miles, “An Orderly Life: Ildefons Cerdà and the Northern Extension of Barcelona,” in Nathaniel Coleman, ed., Imaging and Making the World: Reconsidering Architecture and Utopia.)

Ruskin asks the simple question “What are the virtues of architecture?” and responds by establishing “that it act well; that it speak; that it look well.” (In John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice (New York: E.P. Dutton, n.d.), vol. 1, 33) This statement implies that architecture, by providing comfort, serving as a medium of collective memory and as an aesthetically pleasing artifact, fulfills its social importance. Ruskin by exploring the “nature of the gothic” reads architecture as a socially grounded act of making. (See John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice, chapter 4: The Nature of Gothic.)

In that spirit, William Morris reflects on the changing nature of labor in the context of industrial production, seeing “architecture [...] primarily [...] as [...] art because it cannot be divorced from everyday life [emphasis added],” and Morris continues: “Under such conditions, architecture, as a part of the life of people in general, will again become possible, and I believe that when it is possible, it will have a real new birth, and add so much to the pleasure of life that we shall wonder how people were ever able to live without it.” (In William Morris, “The Revival of Architecture,” Fortnightly Review, May 1888. reprinted in Nikolaus Pevsner, Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century, (Oxford, 1972), pp. 315-24. In Eric Fernie, ed., Art History and its Methods—A Critical Anthology, (London: Phaidon, 1999), 102.)

Morris has a concern with how to reconcile leisure and work, in a manner that is personally beneficial and socially productive. In that sense, the nineteenth century indeed established a number of themes and topics which are still motivating forces behind much of the current architectural debate. It showed the limitations of the strictly formalist approach, but also outlined the latent expressive qualities new structural methods could unleash.

Robert Venturi and Charles Jencks would interpret the crisis of modernism as a crisis of the modernist formal language; a group of vocal advocates of what was seemingly a “rediscovered” historically grounded formal repertoire under the title of postmodernism emerged. Though there is still some vitality in the notions of “hybrid form,” recent readings of that period lead to a conclusion that their ultimate result was a set of stylistic fetishes. (See Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture: A Critical History.)
Unfortunately, the postmodern response received very simplistic appropriation by vast majority of architectural profession, reducing its practice to a strictly formal language with explicit historical references. One can argue that the early work of Robert Venturi and to some extent that of Charles Jencks were misunderstood.

Reacting to the crisis of modernism, and architecture’s futile attempts to play any socially significant role whatsoever, the field at large reacted in number of ways. The concept of autonomy that gained attraction during the 1960s and 1970s and now seems as a conceptually exhausted was a natural corollary to architecture’s essential incapacity to act in a socially responsible manner. Tafuri have argued, that a way out of the conundrum of quasi-modernist excess of the 1950s, was actually a platonist and self-delusional formalistic game, which in the end only obfuscated the entire process of construction and its wider implications. (See Manfredo Tafuri, L’Architecture dans le Budoir: The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language, in Architecture Theory Since 1968, edited by K. Michael Hays.) Indeed an art, architecture cannot be reduced to autonomous form, a self-motivating platonist game, an admired self-referential and self-contained work of art. In the words of Samuel Mockbee: “The practice of architecture not only requires the active individual participation in the profession, but it also requires active civic engagement. The architect’s primary emotional connection should always be with place, and not just the superficial qualities of place, but the ethical responsibility of shaping the environment, or breaking up social complacency and energizing one’s community. It is not prudent for the architect to sit back and rely on the corporate world, science and technology experts to decide what problems to address. It is in our own self-interest to assert our ethical values and our talents as citizen architects.” (In Samuel Mockbee. “The Role of the Citizen Architect”, In Good Deeds, Good Design: Community Service Through Architecture, edited by Bryan Bell (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 151-156. Quoted in Phoebe Crisman. “Environmental and social action in the studio,” in Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures, ed. Florian Kossak, Doina Petrescu, Tatajana Schneider, Renata Tyszczuk and Stephen Walker (London: Routledge, 2010), 36.)

The 1960s saw an intensification of architectural debate and an acceleration of in the production of different notions of architectural practice; this was also a period when the field experienced a certain level of disillusionment and a tide of self-reflective criticality. (See: Bernard Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction) Attempted with varying degrees of success, these experimental practices were meant to reinforce of architecture’s credibility but also represented a latent danger in diffusing architecture’s identity (See Peter Eisenman, Postfunctionalism in Architecture Theory since 1968, edited by K. Michael Hays). In recollecting the legacy of 1960s and contemplating the possibility of social change through and by architecture, Tschumi writes: “Around 1968, together with many in my generation of young architects, I was concerned with the need for an architecture that might change the 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 Situationists, the modes of analysis changed considerably, but all shared a skeptical view of the power of architecture to alter social or political structures.” (In Bernard Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 5.)

Essentially, Giddens’s theory of structuration is to a certain extent an appropriation of the Freudian notions of id, ego and super ego, which he translates to unconsciousness, practical and discursive consciousness, albeit by postulating the boundaries between practical and discursive consciousness in a more diffused and permeable manner. (in Steven Loyal, The Sociology of Anthony Giddens (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 2.) Since “an agent is capable of ‘always doing otherwise,’” “an agent is reintroduced as a knowledgeable actor rather than as a passive unknowing effect of discourse.” (In Anthony Giddens, The Constitution of Society, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1984), 14.) Finally, Giddens speaks in favor of utopian realism, which is particularly appropriate as a model for architecture. (See Reinhold Martin, Critical of What?: Toward a Utopian Realism, in Harvard Design Magazine 22 (2005), 104-9.)
Chapter 3.

Discourse(s) on Program

There is no architecture without action, no architecture without events, no architecture without program.

Bernard Tschumi\textsuperscript{78}

the program is the design

Robert G. Hershberger\textsuperscript{79}

Static Space

It goes without saying that in utilitarian society, the structure of space is based on a principle of orientation. Otherwise, space could not function as a workplace. When the use of time is judged from the point of view of utility, it is important that no time be wasted, and therefore that the time spent travelling between home and workplace should be reduced to a minimum. In other words, space is valued as it functions to this end. That is way all urbanistic conceptions to date have been based on orientation.

Constant Nieuwenhuys\textsuperscript{80}

The reductive readings of program in terms of brief, and notions of program, which either overlook program’s catalytic effects or are just suspicious to any possibility of initiating socially transformative process through architectural practice could be interpreted as an impediment to the architectural approach that utilizes program as a source of agency. Readings of the theoretical production of the late 1950s, the work of John Summerson and Reyner Banham in particular, and understanding of design production of Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas during the 1970s, will situate Price’s notion of program within the wider disciplinary contexts which either informed his work, or were informed by his work. Advocating the

\textsuperscript{78} Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction (1994), 121.
relevance of program promotes architecture’s social contingency as an advantage and not a limitation. In this chapter it is my aim to point out the currency of Price’s understanding of program in terms of Anthony Vidler’s call for a new contemporary approach to program, which relies on a more critical use of advanced software and ethical readings of the social context. I will examine practices of program in relationship to specific speculative design schemes—namely, the Manhattan Transcripts and Parc de la Villete competition entries by Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas, and other established disciplinary and professional “discourses”—brief and form, in order to show the relevance of Price’s approach to program.

While definitions of architecture are as varied as the field itself, most would agree that architecture is determined and characterized by three essential elements: site, structure and program. The initial incentive for architecture to be conceived, conceptualized, developed and built is usually based upon a need, the very basic need of accommodating a certain function or set of functions. In that sense architecture “begins with the program,” as John McMurrough noted:

Program gives license to action: to realize and organize. In all its definitions the agency of program is implied, from radio or television programming, to program as a series of social services, to program as the coded instructions that enable a machine to function...program initiates the [architecture] project’s beginning (in time) and initial identity (in character).

The position and relevance of the notion of program for the entire field, both in disciplinary and professional terms, is changeable. Program is often mistakenly interpreted as ‘brief’, as a set of building’s requirements and instructions given by a client to an architect. In contrast, program

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81 Programming as a specialized professional activity is limited only to “0.075 percent of architect’s standard fee.” In Wolfgang F.E. Preiser ed., “Introduction” in Programming the Built Environment, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1985), 2.
does not necessarily have as detailed a content as brief and seems to be an under-theorized formative element of architectural knowledge. General reflections upon and evaluations of program, as commonly understood by architectural practitioners, remain limited to several studies whose scope and reach is that of a manual, a meticulously crafted “how to” instruction set. These fail to engage the notion of program in a manner that is more critical and facilitates the production of new knowledge. Usually perceived as an external device for a project, program has been subject to otherwise disparate theoretical approaches and explications. As Alberto Pérez-Gómez emphasizes, program embodies the ethical orientation of a project, and by articulating decisively different alternatives, it opens up the possibility of ameliorative change, “the program is the fundamental part of the project, since it is obviously a proposal for lives to be lived.”84 This chapter will attempt to establish logic for the architectural approach which uses the full potential of program, in order to increase users’ and architects’ agency alike, and “to avoid the pitfalls of postmodern parody (formalism).”85

85Ibid., 210.
3.1. Program and Brief

The starting sets of instructions for building in ancient times were simple:86 programs, initially translations of cultural practices and rites, were seen as “collectively sanctioned promises.”87 In a context where technological advances were slow, and the working assignments of the architect and the builder were usually united in one person, programs were straightforward.88 In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, following the rapid development of technology and a proliferation of building types, the aggregation of administrative control and the creation of the system of nations, arose the need for programs that were more detailed, specific and illustrative.89 The shifting knowledge paradigm of the eighteenth century introduced a scientific approach into the field of architecture, which provoked “architectural theorists to consider use and construction as separate disciplines, and hence to stress pure formal manipulation, [yet] the program long remained an important part of the architectural process.”90 Later, this need was accentuated by the demand for large industrial facilities that required a more developed and specific understanding of programming.91 Yet, as Pérez-Gómez has shown, “the architectural program, particularly after the eighteenth century ... [still remained as] ... a promise made by the architect to a client or to society at large.”92

Simplifying program to brief and adopting the technical language of administrative writing ends in formal autonomy: architecture practiced in the abstracted realm of spatial

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89 Ibid.
92 Pérez-Gómez (2006), 123.
concepts divorced from pertinent social relations, results in the interpretation of space as nothing more than a “three dimensional lump of matter.” Architecture was perceived as “ideal space (the product of mental processes) [emphasis added],” not as a forum of rich and diverse human experiences. In that sense, program was “emphasized [as] problem solving rather than problem formulating.” Recently, Jeremy Till, in advocating architecture as a socially contextual praxis, radically attacked autonomy: “The walls of the black box protect architects from the contingencies of the world beyond, allowing them to develop theories and practices unfettered by others.” The program, a locus where social power and political exigencies are practiced and utilized, is a greatly overlooked area of the architectural profession:

there has been an unwritten historical pact formed between the architecture profession and its client groups whereby control over the building program has been traded for control over formal imagery.

As implemented by the vast majority of architectural practices today, program is often reduced to the informational document, seemingly value free and not value driven, an account of projected needs of the client veiled by its “empiricism” and positivistic determinations of what only appears to be an unbiased research judgment. Understanding architecture not only within but also beyond its rhetorical capacities, the question arises: How can an architect, as an active and critically reflexive citizen, through the knowledge of his field, contribute to formation of social processes? The likely answer is: through an appropriate approach program. In that sense, on the problem of reductive readings of program in terms of brief, Till summarizes:

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95 Ibid
96 Till, Architecture Depends (2009), 18.
97 “Worst of all, the defining of briefs in abstract terms suppresses their social content under a set of conservative norms.” In Jeremy Till, Architecture Depends, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 169.
The brief is often seen simply as an instrument of rationality: how one can most efficiently get functions into rooms. Often written by the client, with the assistance of surveyors and project managers, brief reduces architecture to abstract quantity, and are swiftly translated into deadening room data sheets. These reductions are then passed as fait accompli to the architect, who is left with little more to do than turn these systems of flows and efficiencies into plans (a mainly technical act) and then disguise the deficiencies of the process (and their own marginality within it) through dressing the building up in various skins (a merely aesthetic act). Worst of all, the defining of the brief in abstract terms suppresses their social content under a set of conservative norms.99

Out of that comes the necessity of practicing program, beyond conventional brief, as an integral part of architectural endeavor. Till points out:

The creative brief is about negotiating a new set of social relations, it is about juxtapositions of actions and activities, it is about the possibility to think outside the norm, in order to project new spatial, and hence social, conditions.100

Most concerns about program have been summarily dismissed as moribund, pathological vestiges of an historically exhausted functionalist agenda.101 However, the view of program found in the work of Cedric Price, delineates strategies for understanding program beyond brief, where program includes the content of brief but is not only brief. Program articulates a possibility of better social conditions, while certain programming procedures, which will be explained in following chapters, maintain the function of the space in a number of combinations, exploiting architecture’s potential to produce events and in doing so to give agency to users. “To program” means “to discover the nature of an institution or the original beginnings of some activity.”102 In retaking control of program, one seizes control over the issues addressed in an architectural project. In that sense, architecture’s imperative to act ethically is fulfilled. Bernard Tschumi writes:

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99 Till, Architecture Depends (2009), 169.
100 Ibid.
102 Hershberger (1980), 11.
Architecture is not about the conditions of design but about the design of conditions that will dislocate the most traditional and regressive aspects of our society and simultaneously reorganize these elements in the most liberating way, so that our experience becomes the experience of events organized and strategized through architecture. Strategy is a key word in architecture today no more masterplans, no more locating in fixed place, but new heterotopias.\textsuperscript{103}

What Tschumi points out is that the nature of the architectural action demands the through requisitioning of the architecture’s procedures. The program and brief, if activated together in a certain way, can have a catalytic effect on the environment. By approaching program as an evolving entity, Price’s work not only overcomes the limitations of the brief, it enables program to maintain its consistency though time.\textsuperscript{xix} Price’s comprehensive approach to program unites open-endedness and the potential for an evolving use. It also unites a critical assessment of the social and cultural conditions of the environment. His notion of program absorbs time into the structure of his architecture, and in doing so it opens up a possibility of socially transformative effect through architectural practice, eventually enhancing users’ agency.

\textsuperscript{103} Tschumi, \textit{Architecture and Disjunction} (1994), 50.
3.2. Program and Form

Previous sections of the chapter have discussed the relationship of program and brief. This one will map the possibilities of program to generate architectural form. One sees the source of architectural form in geometry and/or program. The question is how program is translated into geometry and vice versa; to what extent are those entities mutually dependent and how? Does program function in response to the geometry set by the architect, or is the relationship more subtle? If the program is driven by user needs, how does it affect the overall form of the project?

Penelope Dean, in “Program Is as Program Does,” speaks of program as a “form-making device.” More specifically, she distinguishes three strategies of generating form: “extruded plan, stacked plates and nested volumes.” The first strategy is explained as a natural corollary to the modernist dialectics of form and function, wherein space originates as a result of a simple vertical translation of the horizontal plan. Historically, this approach to form and program came as a reaction to the Beaux-Arts tradition, where unity was achieved by orchestrating the elements of architectural morphology—rooms for instance; the overall architectural composition decides the ordering of elements—“rooms.” On the other hand, the design approach of Mies van der Rohe sees program as something that is tightly contained within the compositional envelope of the project; the overall outline of the project determines circulation and functional dispositions. In this view of program, form restricts the free use of space.

106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
Although during the 1970s the idea of the program was largely discredited, it retained prominence in the work of Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi, for its capacity to generate events and organize them in a script-like manner. Tschumi noted the lack of causality between program and plan. On the other hand, Rem Koolhaas advanced the notion of program as a way of understanding the project of architecture in terms of the role of the institution at hand in the context of the social and cultural determinants. However, Anthony Vidler sees the limitations of Koolhaas’s notion of program in the rather opportunistic nature of his practice.

Both Tschumi and Koolhaas remain loyal to the idea of architecture which discomforts users through the sudden and unexpected encounter. Koolhaas advances this set of ideas further by exploiting the generic condition of “stacked plates,” which await colonization through the unpredictable circumstances of the metropolis. The Parc la Villette competition (1982/83) marked these two separate approaches in understanding of the relationship between program and form, in the work of Tschumi and Koolhaas. While Tschumi understood program as generic and form as specific, Koolhaas understood form as generic, and program as specific. Both of these views stood in proximity to the ways Price dealt with program and form. Price’s engagement with program seemingly sets the formal features of architecture in the background. However, its constantly changing and evolving characters positions the user as the one who plays an important role in deciding the ultimate form of the edifice. Though both Koolhaas’s and Tschumi’s understanding of program indicate the potential of program

110 See OMA/AMO, Rem Koolhaas, Content (Cologne: Taschen, 2003).
113 During the 1970s, Tschumi and Koolhaas were teachers at the Architectural Association, and it can be assumed that their understanding of program was at least to some degree influenced by Price.
immanent in this concept, these approaches still remain to a degree ineffective. On the possible shortcomings of Tschumi’s approach to program, Pérez-Gómez clarifies:

The program is indeed the most articulate holder of ethical intentionality, entailing a vision of a life driven by the “common good.” Its final formulation (or even the decision to carry out the project or not) is an ethical responsibility of the architect. This is so in spite of the often-argued fact that a few years later his or her building may be converted into a different function. In other words, architecture is neither “autonomus” nor a mere social practice.114

Though Tschumi’s approach to program indeed provided the better understanding of the dynamics of spatial use, it essentially remained disillusioned about program’s capacity to be a vehicle of agency, at least in the initial phases of the project. On the other hand, on reflecting the nature of program in the work of Rem Koolhaas, Anthony Vidler writes:

For Koolhaas, science offer no solutions, only knowledge, solutions are the province of the global managers of power markets. Architects, armed with precise tools offered by information and visual mapping, can only perceive and predict; their role is not in inventing the program, but identifying its raw material.115

Thus, Koolhaas’s attitude towards program is shaped by his rather skeptical view of the capacity of program to be a catalyst for a socially transformative action.

This section presented approaches to program that were close to Price’s work, and have received extensive attention in the field. However, Tschumi’s and Koolhaas’s approaches do not consider the role of the user to the same extent is seen in the work of Cedric Price. Previous portions of text which demonstrated the currency of Price’s work for contemporary design discourse and stated the problem of the relationship between program and form. In the work of Tschumi and Koolhaas, this relationship has been seen as limiting to the full potentiality of program, with an overall aim of producing spaces of freedom.

3.3. Theoretical Discussions of Program

In this section, program will be analyzed in relation to relevant theoretical discussions, both historical and contemporary. Architecture’s identity as a discipline and expectations for its social performativity are closely tied to the ways in which program has been perceived and practiced. The early functionalist approach to program is best presented by the work of Hannes Meyer, who claimed: “Building is nothing but organization: social, technical, economic, psychological organization.”\textsuperscript{116} Modernist readings of architecture in terms of “biological process”\textsuperscript{117} promoted an understanding of the subject of architecture as a subject of scientific knowing, a form of empirical knowledge and the focus of positivistic scrutiny. The possibilities and repercussions of the early modernist view of the program were also evident in what now seems a somewhat naive belief of the Russian historical avant-garde that “social condensers, communal kitchens, worker’s clubs, [and] theaters, factories [...] accompanied a new vision of social and family structure.”\textsuperscript{118}

However, many state-sponsored post-World War II mass housing developments, which lacked a basic concern for the intimacy of human dwelling, were indicative of modernism’s crisis. They also motivated for an urgent requalification of architecture’s “proven” design procedures. In response, some resorted to revisiting the notion of typology and formal issues.\textsuperscript{xxiv} The ultimate failure of the “scientific” functionalist approach to program found its resonance in the work of critiques like that of Colin Rowe. In the article “program vs. Paradigm: Otherwise casual Notes on the Pragmatic, the Typical and the Possible,” Rowe acknowledged the limitations of anchoring architecture’s legitimacy in the realm of program. More importantly, he

\textsuperscript{118} Tschumi Architecture and Disjunction (1994), 41.
spoke of the necessity of a distinctive formal language, and argued “against the unspeakably odd assumption that the best of the architect should be no more than a transparent filter, a lens (interjecting nothing) between the ‘scientific’ program and the ‘popular result.’”\textsuperscript{119} Rowe would show no sympathy toward architecture as typologically grounded inquiry, either.

Still, “program” is often cited as the central, most innovative principle of modern architecture. On the occasion of being presented the Royal Institute of British Architects’ Gold Medal, Sir John Summerson (1957) made an effort to theoretically explicate the source of legitimacy of modern architecture. He positioned it in the realm of the architectural program, which he defined as “a description [emphasis added] of the spatial dimensions, spatial relationships, and other physical conditions required for the convenient performance of specific conditions.”\textsuperscript{120} By posing the question of modern architecture’s source of legitimacy, Summerson asked not only what is architecture’s source of interiority, but also if there is something that is decidedly unique about modernist architecture, something which makes it essentially different to other historical architectural movements and periods. Initially he asked himself whether intrinsically modern forms exist and how they can be distinguished. He immediately disqualifies that approach, by proclaiming that:

Such is the prima facie case for a specific theory of modern architecture. I have tried to make it sound plausible but of course it is hopelessly gimcrack. Only imagine for a moment the task of isolating characteristically modern forms from whole buildings. Only imagine the horror of stirring around in the rag-bag of aphorisms, platitudes, and fancy jargon and trying to determine their common trend and resultant meaning. The imagination boggles, and when it does that is a sure sign that something stupid is being attempted.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{119} Colin Rowe, “Program vs. Paradigm: Otherwise casual Notes on the Pragmatic, the Typical and the Possible,” in \textit{As I was saying: Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays}, ed. Alexander Caragonne, Vol. 2. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 27.
\textsuperscript{121} Summerson (1957, 1993), 227.
Summerson remained adamant in presenting not only a theory of modern architecture, but seeking to understand the meaning and purpose of any theory of architecture; he aimed at a comprehension of the discipline’s guiding principles.

Summerson’s work sheds light on the purported criticism of modern architecture, which dismisses it as a mere quantifiable reflection of the rationalistic enlightenment agenda. In fact, he points out the deep humanist orientation of modernism at large. He understands antiquity as the source of unity for contemporary architecture, and moves beyond Laszlo Moholy-Nagy’s biological determinism. Additionally Summerson quotes Bruno Zevi’s notion that the organic conception of architecture is based “on social idea and not on a figurative (I [Summerson] take it he [Zevi] means formal) idea.”\footnote{122 Bruno Zevi, 	extit{Towards an Organic Architecture} (London: Faber & Faber, 1950), 76.} Essentially Zevi’s quote directs Summerson to reply: “The source of unity in modern architecture is in the social sphere, in other words in the architect’s \textit{program} [emphasis added].”\footnote{123 Summerson (1957, 1993), 230.} The disciplinary implications of this approach are wide. Summerson would note: “From antiquity (a world of form) to the program (a local fragment of social pattern): this suggests a swing in the architect’s psychological orientation almost too violent to be credible.”\footnote{124 Ibid., 232.} This position is further advocated in the work of Cedric Price, following the call by Reyner Banham, who in his concluding remarks to \textit{Theory and Design in the First Machine Age} calls for a more substantive embrace of technology, beyond the superficial emanation of the aesthetic of the machine. Finally, if program does not offer a blueprint for form, it certainly “adumbrates” it.

Summerson openly questions functionalism, and sees it just as another derivate of French rational architectural theory. However, in his view, rationality remains the backbone of modernist work, which is nothing more than architecture’s continuing reliance on formal
language and its features. Summerson is committed to the notion of program, but he is not convinced that the proposed framework would actually bring theoretical stability. He states that “the flaw [is] that while antiquity was eliminated as an absolute, nothing was introduced which took its place as a universally accredited language of architectural form,” and proclaims:

It is quite possible that the missing language will remain missing, and that in fact the slightly uncomfortable feeling which some of us have that it ought to exist is nothing but the scar left in the mind by the violent swing which has taken place in the lifetime of one generation from an old order of principles to a new.\(^{125}\)

Summerson, by comparing architecture to engineering, sets the evaluative criteria for both fields. While engineering remains a field where success is easily calculated and proven, in architecture, performance is judged purely on qualitative terms. Generally, most of the examples cited in this thesis cater to the understanding of program best summarized in his words by John Summerson:

the program has ceased to be evaluated merely quantitatively and has come to be evaluated qualitatively. This has to do with the fact that programs have become more complex, more challenging, and therefore more susceptible to qualitative generalization and evaluation. It has also to do with very much wider issues involved in the social revolutions and reorientations of our time.\(^{127}\)

Summerson noted: “He [the architect] may have extracted from the program a set of interdependent relationships adding up to a unity of biological kind, but he still has to face up to the ordering of a vast number of variables, and how he does this is a question.”\(^{128}\)

This context informed the essential character and core concerns of Price’s work—a fact that was pointed out by Anthony Vidler. The necessity of requalifying the notion of program goes against the tide of simplistic use of computational tools, but can be situated in a wider

\(^{125}\) Ibid., 235.
\(^{126}\) Ibid.
\(^{127}\) Ibid., 233.
\(^{128}\) Ibid., 233-234.
historical context as well. Combining historical accounts with reflections on the contemporary notions of program, Vidler summarizes the programmatic legacy of the 1960s:

In 1960, the fundamental question was the nature of the “program” conceived of in the widest possible sense, adopted for architecture, a program that comprehended and subsumed both function and form. Not “form follows function,” but form as, in a real sense, program and vice versa. For Banham, a truly scientific program for architecture would take in all aspects previously left to tradition, including the aesthetics of perception, human response (visual, psychological, biological) technologies of the environment, and the like; science would simply reveal and propose the best solutions to the design of shelter.

Moving beyond the predicaments of early modernism’s approach to program, Vidler sees “the problem of “translation” of data into meaningful form” as still acute. Not surprisingly, he quotes:

Cedric Price’s Fun Palace, conceived by Joan Littlewood, and considered by Price as a “giant neo-futurist machine,” ran very close to programmatic revolution for which he was calling in 1960: a giant anti-building” seen as a zone of total probability, in which the possibility of participating in practically everything could be caused to exist [emphasis added].

Revisiting program is almost a necessity, especially at a time when architecture’s role has been “gradually reduced to the symbolic and the emblematic.” The notion of program probably is one of the rare disciplinary points where architecture’s social credibility can be restored, evidence that there is indeed some substance left to the field, beyond the alluring ornamental facades that result from advanced software uses. More importantly, postulating program, and not geometry, as the backbone of architectural work seems to open a new realm of potentiality.

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131 Ibid., 60.
132 Ibid., 66.
133 Ibid., 59.
for architecture’s future at a time when its materiality is challenged by the pervasive influence of digitalization. As Vidler summarized:

Banham’s insistence on the role of aesthetics—of the viewer and in experience—in a promulgation of a new architecture adds to this significance and invokes the possibility of reconceiving the notion of program in a way that occludes the fatal modernist gap between form and function and incorporates environmental concerns, technology and formal invention as integral to a single discourse. “Une architecture autre” was, in 1960, a promise of “tomorrow”; its realization today has become not only possible, but also urgent [emphasis added].

Vidler also advocates the necessity of new readings of the notion of program, not to “invoke program in the limited functionalist or political approaches of the early modernism, nor even in the revived typological and diagrammatic forms of late modernism,” but in favor of “a rather contemporary sense of program which would imply the radical interrogation of the ethical and environmental conditions of the specific sites, which are considered programs in themselves.”

It that sense, work of Cedric Price offers a precedent in practicing program which overcomes the understanding of program as a list of rooms, and promotes a vision of architecture as a significant tool of agency.

This chapter has presented several facets of program, which have both historical credence and contemporary theoretical currency. It dealt with the externality of program to the architectural project, the need to deal with the social and cultural context as an integral part of architectural work, the limitations and possibilities of program as form generating device, the relationship between program/brief, program and intended use of space and with the program as the vehicle of agency and social activism for an architect.

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134 See Antoine Picon, *Digital Culture in Architecture: An Introduction for Design Professions.*
136 Ibid., 59.
Cedric Price’s notions of program reconciled many of the issues discussed in the previous paragraph. The work of Price offers a possible alternative for overcoming the modernist troubled relationship between form and function, through the application of cybernetic theory. It also reflects on the causal relationship between plan and use of space, to what extent it is simple and predetermined. This chapter discussed the negative repercussions of simplifying program to brief, a problem which, as shall be shown, finds a resolution in the work of Price through interaction with the user. In the following chapters, using specific projects by Price, I will examine procedures and design effects of Price’s approach to program as a “living” entity which is in constant exchange with the user, learning and evolving from that experience.

"A crucial part of architecture’s linguistic dimension is the program. It is important to emphasize that the architectural program is a promise. The program is never neutral, a simple list of requirements given by a client or an institution that absolves the architect of responsibility. Agreeing to design a prison, a museum, or a hospital is a complex decision that may have grave consequences. If the architect accepts the commission, he or she must be convinced that the institution itself contributes to the common good. It may be possible to transform a given program through dialogue with the client or my means of political maneuvering, and to enhance a sense of fairness through beauty for the indwellers. It may also seem inconceivable to put away individuals whose moral worth may be superior to that of their jailers, to aestheticize or decontextualize human artifacts as some museums have done in the past two centuries, or to contribute to the pathologies of society by merely framing technological processes rather than proposing an environment for healing. Programmatic decisions commit the architect and should not be taken lightly. Every institution poses particular questions that cannot be answered by note. It does not suffice to make a facility efficient and pleasant.” (In Pérez-Gómez (2006), 209.)

As Robert Hershberger put it, “Many of the most important formative decisions have been made before the architect begins to design. If the programmer was concerned primarily with functional efficiency, many organizational decisions will have been made and agreed to by the client that will significantly affect the form of the building. If the programmer was concerned more with the social and psychological needs of the users, prescriptions for form will be inherent in the given spaces, their sizes, characteristics, and relationships. If the programmer was primarily concerned with economics, it is possible that numerous material and system opportunities as well as potentially unique spaces and places will already have been eliminated from design consideration. The point is that the values and concerns of the architectural programmer are likely to have a profound effect on the ultimate form of the building, possibly reducing the sphere of the designer to decisions about decorative effect. …

The thrust of the argument to be presented here is that a carefully conceived and executed program can and should promote architecture. The objective is to program for architecture, for environments that not only facilitate some human purpose or activity, but transcend both to create something of wonder—something that somehow captures the essence of the institution; relates marvelously to the site, climate, and time; enhances the potential of the user; expresses the highest aspirations of client, architect, and society; and ultimately moves the user in some special way.

Programming should not focus exclusively on defining the problem. Programming should serve as a vehicle to question the problem, to discover the nature of the client organization, to explore and discover the values of society, client, user, and architect, such that in the hands of a talented designer the program becomes a guidepost for achieving high-quality architecture.” (In Robert G. Hershberger, “A Theoretical Foundation for Architectural Programming,” in Programming the Built Environment, ed. Wolfgang F. E. Preiser (New York: Van Nostrand Company, 1980), 8-9.)

“The textual form of the program is not neutral either. Choosing to express it as an “objective” set of parts with specifications of size is obviously one more false attempt to hiding its true nature. A narrative fiction expressing qualities of poetic inhabitation with regard to a specific culture and its values is indispensible, particularly given the demise of ritual as the epitome of significant human action.” (In Pérez-Gómez, Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics (2006), 209.)

“However, there is downside to the agency of program: it defines, but it also limits…Program is therefore, constitution and over prescription; it alternates between an evocation of arrangement and a surplus of such arrangements.” (In John McMurrrough, “Notes on the Adaptive Re-use of Program,” Praxis 8 (2006): 103.)

Additionally, how those spatial relations established by the program are articulated through circulation and are finally readable and comprehensible through the configuration of the edifice. The architecture of
Cedric Price as a continuum of discrete spaces and constantly changing network of uses and temporal events offers an opportunity in rethinking program in a manner which is both historically reflexive and grounded in contemporaneity.

Peneolope Dean also quotes the work of Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa and their Glass Pavilion for the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio where two hybrid programs (museum and glass factory) are so positioned that they are mutually complementary figures, See Penelope Dean, “Program Is as Program does,” in Praxis 8 (2006), 49.

Praised for the quality of its drawings, Tschumi’s Manhattan Transcripts tend to develop his notion of program beyond the usual dialectic of drawing/built work. Namely, the notional system he employs goes beyond the common understanding of the architectural drawing as something that instigates the reciprocity between the spaces and their possible uses and promotes program beyond the notion of function, program as a framework for programming events and a set of spatial intensities facilitated by human encounters. In doing so he seeks to understand immaterial notions of architecture and architecture’s capacity to generate events. Tschumi’s Manhattan transcripts are interactions of space, movements and events in and appropriated by time. Tschumi makes an effort to overcome the divide between typology and program through his notational system. Essentially, he exploits the possibilities of the singularity of form and multiplicity of functions. Tschumi plays both with the program and form which shapes, morphs and disintegrates itself in the collision with the program. In Tschumi’s work the lyrical quality of the drawing and maverick character of the design procedures argue for another kind of programming, one that is granted in and goes beyond the proscribed phases of conventional practice.

His architecture employs a repertoire that builds on an industrial aesthetics, which is primitive and simplified in its appearance.

Aldo Rossi’s critique of the modernist/functionalist simplifications in understanding and analysis of the city his insistence of the notion of typology, elaborations of the ways urban memory is coded in the urban form, and the notion of urban form as embodiment of the experience of the city, established the necessity of anchoring the theory of architecture in the theory of the city. In appraisal of architecture as form, influential thinkers like Rowe would exhibit skepticism toward modernity and its social reasoning.

Program could also be a vocal expression of the architect’s own agenda, of his concern and priorities. From the architect’s point of view, the program is the initial stage of his or her expression of authorship. In the selective choice and qualitative evaluation of the met conditions of the site, the architect makes initial pre-selection and preliminary judgments which decidedly define the project. (See Anthony Vidler, “Towards a Theory of the Architectural Program.” October 106, 2003.)
Chapter 4. Program in the Work of Cedric Price:

Interface, Memory Device and “Evolutionary” Diagram

Like man, fun is a 3-letter word

David Clemens in Daily Mirror, May 1968

Dynamic Space
If, on other hand, we imagine a ludic society, where the creative forces of the masses are unleashed, this principle loses all meaning. A static structure of space is irreconcilable with the continual changes in the behavior that could occur in a society without work. Ludic activities will lead inevitably to space becoming dynamic. Homo ludens impinges on his environment: he interrupts, changes, intensifies; he follows paths and in passing, leaves traces of his presence everywhere.

Constant Nieuwenhuys

Program in Price’s work can be described as an informational structure and a virtual device for educationally relevant play that absorbs users’ experience and further develops it. His architecture is essentially a digitally driven playful toy, Price’s notion of program enables different possible uses of space to emerge in interaction with the user. This chapter will give a broad overview and synthetic understanding of his approach to program. Essentially, Cedric Price’s idea of program makes his work analogous to an organism, an artificial form of life which evolves with context and in reaction to user input. Program works as an interface, memory device, and evolutionary diagram, facilitated by the application of computational tools, cybernetics in particular.

These three notions of program all emerged in his project for the Fun Palace. They were further developed in Generator, where program gained a new attribute—the one of

“thinking”— and peaked in the case of Japan Net where it extended its effect and scope to the level of the city. Program as an interface facilitates the use and distribution of space according to input from the user. Program as a memory device collects and arranges those inputs in a meaningful form and establishes usage patterns. In the Generator project, program was seen as having the capacity to produce suggestions, almost a form of “artificial” intelligence. Price also understood program to be a heuristic memory device, a constantly evolving and changing interpretative tool of the subject’s self-actualization and rediscovery. Finally, program as an evolutionary diagram, most evident in the case of the Fun Palace, enables an understanding of architecture as a system, which echoes with the rhythms of the social context, and “dematerializes” when the milieu renders its role obsolete. To summarize, Price, in the case of the Fun Palace, reads architecture as an interface in a process of continual shift and change. In the case of Generator, the architecture is again reconfigurable, yet it follows the model of computational knowledge more confidently by introducing one important dimension, that of heuristic memory. Price’s Japan Net scheme reads the city as a polygon from which architecture builds its integrity and promotes self-betterment, which has catalytic effects on the environment.

In Cedric Price’s approach to design, program does not only accommodate function; it creates new functions in the relationship between the parts, with input from the user. By leaving the programmatic substance of his edifices open, his projects accommodated a number of usages. By applying systems theory and cybernetics in particular, Price conceived the architectural program as a complex organizational system that evolves with time and in line with

140 “Certain kinds of machines and some living organisms— particularly the higher living organism—can, as we have seen, modify their patterns of behavior in the basis of past experience so as to achieve specific antientropic ends.” In Norbert Wiener, Human use of Human Beings (New York: Doubleday, 1954), 48.

feedback from the context.\textsuperscript{142} Essentially, program is a toolkit for generating events and experiences, remaining a vehicle of social transformation which accommodates impact from the environment.

By posing the question of what is the nature of the institution at hand, Price promotes program as a vitally important component of the architectural work.\textsuperscript{143} The three projects discussed in this thesis—Fun Palace, Generator and Japan Net—redefine how we usually understand certain building typologies by asking, respectively, what is a theater, what is a “retreat” space and what is a “university housing” project? That redefinition stems out of Price’s belief that architecture\textsuperscript{144} can be a tool and not an end in the architect’s endeavor. Price was successful in at least one regard: he articulated the formulation of the problem which, by using the materiality of architectural knowledge, accelerated social dynamics. Utilizing program, the architect can act as an agent of change and be a highly socially engaged individual. Price has articulated a notion of architecture/program as something that not only utilizes the use of computational tools, but is a computational tool in its own right. Following the logic of the machine yet maintaining the necessity of providing “delight,” architecture became a constantly changing entity that is aesthetically pleasing, yet also socially ameliorative and conducive.

To fulfill such an ambitious agenda, Price deployed a diversity of tools, including cybernetics. The meaning of the term \textit{cybernetics} was laid down in 1948 in the book \textit{Cybernetics; or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine} by Norbert Wiener. Wiener sought to capitalize on the research experiences of World War II, especially “in mechanical


control systems such as servomechanisms and artillery targeting systems."\textsuperscript{145} Cybernetics will eventually emerge as a field which deals with the principles and organization of complex system, which are not necessarily "artificial systems, but ... evolved, natural systems such as organisms and societies, which set their own goals, rather than being controlled by their creators."\textsuperscript{146} Norbert Wiener points out: "Two of the phenomena which we consider to be characteristic of living systems are the power to learn and the power to reproduce themselves."\textsuperscript{147} He promoted the idea that "a learning machine must be programmed by experience."\textsuperscript{148} Wiener’s main contribution to cybernetics is the understanding that "all animals are machines subject to feedback"\textsuperscript{149} implying that:

the organism is seen as message. Organism is opposed to chaos, to disintegration, to death, as message is to noise. To describe an organism, we do not try to specify each molecule in it, and catalogue it bit by bit, but rather to answer certain questions about it which reveal its pattern: a pattern which is more significant and less probable as the organism becomes, so to speak, more fully an organism.\textsuperscript{150}

While Wiener’s work is illustrative of the initial attempts of cybernetics “after the control engineering and computer science disciplines had become fully independent, the remaining cyberneticists felt the need to clearly distinguish themselves from these mere mechanistic approaches, by emphasizing autonomy, self-organization, cognition, and the role of the observer in modeling system. In an early 1970s this movement became known as second-order cybernetic."\textsuperscript{151} This new approach “recognizes that a system as an agent in its own right, interacting with another agent, the observer.”\textsuperscript{152} Cybernetic theory provided a model that,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{147} Norbert Wiener, \textit{Cybernetics or control and communication in the animal and the machine} (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1948, and 1961, Second Printing, November 1962.), 169.
  \item \textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 177.
  \item \textsuperscript{150} Norbert Wiener, \textit{Human Use of Human Beings} (New York: Doubleday, 1954), 95.
  \item \textsuperscript{151} Heylighen and Joyslin (2001): 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
when applied to architecture, sought to overcome control mechanisms established by conventional building typologies, and ultimately to enhance the user’s agency. Though the practice of cybernetics was problematic at some levels, at least it offered a rare historical precedent in rethinking alternative paths for the current use of computational tools.

Price’s architecture addresses the issue of program through the notion of a “kit of parts,” which embeds time in the structure of the building and enables its evolutionary nature. In Price’s view, architecture enters a dialogue with the city, as will be shown in the case of Japan Net. In this project, Price saw the dialogue as the communal consensus, made possible by technology, unleashing its transformative potential. Essentially, Price’s idea of architecture was the idea of using it as a “cybernetic platform for learning and leisure,” which promotes use of public space and unmediated human encounters. The following chapters will provide a more detailed overview of his specific tactics.

153 “if different observers agree about a percept or a concept, then this phenomena may be considered “real” by consensus. This process of reaching consensus over shared concepts has been called “the social construction of reality.” Gordon Pask’s Conversation Theory provides a sophisticated formal model of such a “conversational” interaction that ends in an agreement over shared meanings.” In Francis Heylighen and Cliff Joyslin, “Cybernetics and Second-Order Cybernetics.” In R. A. Meyers (ed.), Encyclopedia of Physical Science and Technology (3rd ed.), New York: Academic Press, 2001, 22.

The challenges of the socially affirmative action through architecture reduced the architectural act to the conceptual mode of inquiry which mainly manipulates geometry of form, or is simply subsumed by the uncritical embrace of context. On the other hand, Cedric Price, by framing architecture as a utopian manifestation, not only designs the architecture of the utopian process but promotes the idea of architecture which embodies that same process.
Chapter 5. Fun Palace:

Program as an Interface

*Each of the small decisions a person makes—what to wear, what to eat, how to conduct himself at work, whom to meet with later in the evening—contributes to such routines. All such choices (as well as larger and more consequential ones) are decisions not only about how to act but who to be.*

Anthony Giddens\(^{155}\)

*The project will be multilateral rather than comprehensive.*

Cedric Price\(^{156}\)

The introduction of computation to the field of architecture deepened interests in programming, and intense social engagement by architects were formative currents within progressive architectural discourse during the sixties. Price’s Fun Palace project (1961-74), still cited for its social imaginativeness and prescient character, exemplifies those debates\(^{xxvii}\) and provides insights that still have some currency for the field of architecture.\(^{xxviii}\) The Fun Palace’s inception,\(^{157}\) conceptualization, and repeated efforts to bring it to completion provide a basis for articulating alternative ways of practicing architecture. Also, the Fun Palace sheds a new light on programmatic procedures and its dependent spatial sequence, which affirms the user as important figure in the architectural process.\(^{xxix}\) The issue of agency in architecture and


programming strategies is considered important, especially in the context where architectural production and discourse are to a great extent reliant and dependent on the uncritical embrace of the social and cultural milieu that generates them.xxx

In this chapter, the Fun Palace will be examined in terms of the characteristics of its architecture, its relationship to different social and cultural contexts, and the mechanisms it employs in interacting with the user. I will try to reconstruct the design intent and procedures, especially in terms of the relationship between program and brief, in order to demonstrate the possible socially transformative effects of Price’s design approach. Additionally, I will show some of the downsides of the application of the cybernetic theory to architectural practice.

The most comprehensive description of the Fun Palace is provided by Stanley Matthews, who situates the project in its social and cultural milieu, relates it to Price’s professional trajectories, and also provides its detailed chronology. As Matthews has demonstrated, the development of the Fun Palace project had several important iterations, two of which are the most important: Mill Meads and Camden Town Pilot Project. The projected capacity of the Fun Palace was 50,000 people, and the anticipated average loading was about 3,500.\textsuperscript{158}

The project was designed as a dynamic environment with only a few permanent, static elements (Fig. 1). A steel framework together with moving cranes (according to Stanley Mathews, two cranes were agreed upon between Price and Frank Newby) form the outline for constantly changeable architecture. The entire complex was situated on a platform, which was originally supposed to be a parking deck, and also established and maintained a connection to other communication flows and infrastructural corridors, making Fun Palace accessible by train or river. The central bay accommodated large public gatherings and service towers; this area was flanked by two side aisles, which contained viewing decks and restaurants (Fig. 2). Conforming to the large rectangular outer limit of the plan, the central open-air space was also potentially flanked, on the transverse sides, with multi-deck car parking. Vertical circulation was made possible by moving walkways, conventional stairs, and escalators. The entire
structure contained pneumatic elements, and was covered with a transformable roof. The mass participation area was supposed to support standing and seating, as well as multidirectional movement. In addition, high-level screens were scattered throughout the Fun Palace.

The social ambition of the Fun Palace was supported by a number of scenarios developed by the Ideas Group developed. The Fun Palace was divided into six organizational zones: Zone I—“teaching machines,” for educational purposes; Zone II was allocated for “participation of new forms of expression” in dance and theater; Zone III—film production facilities; Zone IV—laboratory based work; Zone V—ateliers for “painting, sculpture”; and Zone VI—“dance and music.” These Zones did not translate directly to physical equivalents in the Fun Palace. Initial sketches and conceptual designs were done without a specific site in mind. That fact made the architectural task even more challenging. Through the whole process of project development, the Fun Palace was seen as part of a network of infrastructural systems that included a number of recreational and communal uses. Additionally, the Fun Palace seems to create a framework capable of reconciling the openness and free use of a public park with the advantages of a mechanically equipped conventional architectural space.

On the other hand, the pilot project for Camden Town (1964), along Hawley Road, exploits a more distinct modular formal vocabulary, coupled with pneumatic elements and screens. The general plan calls for a stairway to connect two parts of the plot. The overall configuration enables a number of public uses and amenities, as well as other tools that give protection from noise and excessive sunlight. Essentially, the pilot project works as an activating mechanism for the public use of space, in terms of the numerous activities and age groups it catered.

The Fun Palace does not stand alone as an example of this new and distinct design sensibility, but is well grounded in the social and cultural context of the 1960s. It is illustrative of a different architectural approach that is deeply suspicious toward the traditions and conventions of the profession.
To claim that Price’s architecture lacks a formal brilliance would be an understatement;¹⁶⁰ however, even a brief and cursory comparative analysis between Sir Basil Spence’s Sea and Ships Pavilion (Fig. 3) and the Fun Palace unveils a similar mode and tone in formal appearances and features, not only in the layout of the structural system, but also in the use of a system of adaptable slabs and in the reuse of materials. The entire endeavor of the Festival of Britain offers a prelude to the ideas around which most later architectural debates in Britain would orbit. xxxvi—The Fun Palace was developed in the politically charged and volatile times of post-war Britain, which decisively influenced its character.

New readings and analysis of the Fun Palace should not be limited to its relationships with mainstream architectural production of that time, but should be understood in the context of more radical projects as Constant Nieuwenhuys’s New Babylon and Mike Webb’s Sin Center (also referred to as the Entertainments Center (1959-61)). Whether and to what extent the Fun

Palace was influenced by Webb’s project is of lesser importance; however, both are indicative of pervading atmosphere in architectural circles.\(^{161}\)

The design for Sin Center, actually a center for entertainment, was a thesis that Webb attempted to defend unsuccessfully, “until James Stirling eventually intervened on his behalf.”\(^{162}\) Webb’s project openly questions the masculinity of the modernist form/function relationship, blending pedestrian flows with vehicular transport in the spatial pattern of a helix. Sin Centre exploits the latent visual potential of infrastructural systems in not only revealing them but also integrating them in a coherent and memorable architectural idiom. The outer envelope is characterized by the use of the tensile skin and cables, which makes the edifice appear as an almost living, moving and vibrant entity, which “permitted flexibility of planning within a fixed frame.”\(^{163}\) The entire concept both in terms of organizational, structural and visual features radically departs from what was considered normative practice at that time.

The late fifties brought not only “the transformation of political life, and social life in general, into a spectacular phantasmagoria,”\(^{164}\) but equally potent and creative architectural responses to it. Constant’s New Babylon (Fig. 4, Fig. 5) certainly establishes a set of themes that have to be addressed in the task of contextualizing and positioning the Fun Palace. Almost a utopian vision of the alternative future for the post-industrial society, the New Babylon reveals the poetic qualities still inherent in the everyday. A combination of architectural models and equally engaging drawings, the New Babylon imagines alternative dynamic spaces (Fig. 5). The New Babylon promotes architecture as moveable and changeable, grounded in new readings of the temporal paradigm. It essentially blends art, architecture and life, and does so in a way that

\(^{161}\) See Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price.*
\(^{163}\) Ibid., 141.
goes far beyond the modernist notions of autonomy of the work of art. The architect’s role has been thoroughly redefined; it is the ordering of the atmosphere, certain spatial and morphological constellations—“situations”—that will eventually provoke betterment of the users’ lives.

In a sense the Fun Palace exploits the same set of architectural concepts; although it is more radical in form and content, it is also far more realistic and feasible. Seen by some almost as an iteration of the Situationists’ agenda, the Fun Palace suffered from the same set of issues which would eventually render their architecture impossible, or at least very unlikely. Both the concepts of the dérive and the détournement required specific architectural strategies to make them operational at the level of project. Like the Fun Palace, these projects were concerned with the application of models of computational knowledge, based in a deep belief in the promise of program and impact it can deliver to social relations.


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166 See Thomas McDonough, *The Dérive and Situationist Paris*. 
Interpreted as a set of organizational rules, almost ephemeral in its malleability and changeability (Fig. 6), the Fun Palace stands out as an example of the architectural work that consciously and critically questions the met conditions of the social, cultural and political context. By doing so, Fun Palace thoroughly interrogates the nature of the architectural act itself (Fig. 7), and it:
shows that architectural action, and the intention that produces it may become manifest not through the composition of ‘lines and angles’ that define a physical composition solving given problems (societal, formal or technical), but in revealing, and adjusting, the substructures that designate those problems.\textsuperscript{167}

Figure 7 Office of Cedric Price, network analysis representing the decision-making process necessary before the construction of the Fun Palace. Source: Tim Anstey, “Where is the Project? Cedric Price on architectural action.” in Critical Architecture, eds. Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill, Mark Dorrian and Murray Fraser, (London: Routledge, 2007), 220.

The Fun Palace was designed as a complex of architectural procedures which should be applied to adequate and accommodating contexts.\textsuperscript{xxxviii} As an educational catalyst, the Fun Palace revealed the promise of betterment even in the late phases of projects (1974) when the bulk of efforts were intended to revive the entire endeavor in more feasible terms. The Fun Palace actually epitomizes a substantively different approach to architectural space, which because of the need to think differently about program, postulates space in dynamic terms at the cross-section of architectural artifacts, spatial sensations and environmental contexts.\textsuperscript{xxxix}

5.1. Practicing Program: Increasing Users’ Agency

What will I be? Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, richman, spaceman, con-man, thief?\(^{168}\)

The Fun Palace was a specific architectural medium whose innovative impulse was in the possibilities it opened up for the user in activating leisure time as he or she finds most fit, while maintaining the open-endedness of the learning experience (Fig. 8). Though this remained its chief aim, specific procedures (applications of systems theory and cybernetics), and the prominent role that the Cybernetic Subcommittee and Gordon Pask\(^{169}\) would later play, ultimately compromised the initial intentions of the Fun Palace. Instead of a liberating mechanism, it became a protocol of social control, by favoring certain uses over others.\(^{170}\)

The Fun Palace stands in relation to cultural practices of that time as a medium that opens up alternative paths, by relying on the users’ competence to forge new experiences, and beyond the socially prescribed, outdated nineteenth-century ideas of cultural institutions as emancipatory, but essentially oppressive and eventually reactionary.\(^{171}\) The social implications of the Fun Palace made it very appealing across the wide spectrum of society and the entire effort attracted significant media attention as well as substantive support. By blending leisure and work, the Fun Palace activates architectural mechanisms which facilitate a subject’s use of time beyond their social predefinitions.\(^{16}\)

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The Fun Palace was motivated by the ambitions of both Littlewood and Price to provide empowering spaces of freedom. In programmatic terms, the Fun Palace can be defined loosely as a hybrid between education and theater. On the other hand, a simplification like that though in its essence limited, is still indicative of the potential in the program of theater as such. As such it strives to accommodate the architectural program beyond the homogeneity of the discrete spaces and embraces the condition in-between.

The program of the Fun Palace is an essential reaction to the established precepts of the architectural profession, to the customary reading of the certain building types and to the perception of the role and position of the architectural brief in the design process. The notion of program in the case of Fun Palace can be best illustrated with a metaphor of the “toy,” or educational device. More specifically,
With such a large scale toy available for use and mis-use by all it is hoped to contribute to the total enjoyment of an urban industrialized 20th century society.\textsuperscript{172}

The overall function and design intent of the Fun Palace was to generate events which are socially conducive. In other words, the aim was to:

create a university of the streets—not a “gracious” park but a foretaste of the pleasures of 1984. It will be a laboratory of pleasure, providing room for many kinds of action.\textsuperscript{173}

In this section, I will examine different attributes of program, while delineating possible protocols for social action. In the Fun Palace project, program operates as interface, memory device and “evolutionary diagram.” To a certain extent, the entire design and content of the Fun Palace is a response to the nineteenth-century call by Ruskin and Morris to unify work and leisure, and it does so through the architectural device of the program. From spectator to actor, from physical to virtual, from static space to dynamic space, from solitude to public encounter, that is the program of the Fun Palace.\textsuperscript{xlii}

5.1.1. The Brief of the Fun Palace

The Fun Palace’s project brief certainly forms the integral part of the program. Program and brief both express a need for an architectural project to fulfill certain set of utilitarian demands. Unfortunately, no matter how receptive program and brief are to the needs of the user, they are still marked by its essential paternalistic character. The Fun Palace project seeks to overcome that trap by introducing the fourth dimension—that of time.

The Cedric Price Archive at the Canadian Center for Architecture contains a document entitled Fun Palace Project Report with a section labeled Architectural Brief and a stamp stating that it was confidential. The brief critically scrutinizes the context:

Why a Fun Palace? Recent discussion about increased leisure time and routine work has only emphasized the problems which have been with us for many years. The basis of all these problems lies in the lack of facilities for people to enjoy themselves in the way they would like.\(^{174}\)

Also, it sees architectural potential in reclaiming leisure as educationally relevant play, an improvement over the intellectual inactivity of consumer culture:

There are large parts of every day when it is almost impossible to find food and drink, entertainment and other facilities for leisure. There are few places where the majority of the population can make their own entertainment, most being designed for passive entertainment only; and to most people specialized information and new discoveries are out of reach. The first aim of the Fun Palace would be to provide these facilities.\(^{175}\)

The Fun Palace’s Architectural Brief doesn’t explicitly state the programmatic requirements, but makes its purpose obvious:

...to set up a pleasurable environment, available 24 hours a day as varied as possible and capable of change, to provide facilities for conventional and unconventional entertainment; learning and investigation; expression of creative, constructive and


\(^{175}\) Ibid.
imaginative ideas, to provide any amenities, facilities and equipment as might reasonably be required by users, to provide good food and drink at reasonable prices, to give access to information and scientific knowledge not normally available to the majority of people.176

This lack of explicitness in defining the function remains the Brief’s greatest strength; while maintaining the open-endedness of the use it facilitates a wide array of uses, not originally planned. As stated elsewhere in the same document, the goal is:

Architectural Brief. To design an environment large enough to contain as many amenities and facilities as might reasonably be required and flexible enough to allow changes to be made as the demand arises; considering the following conditions: access to the site by as many means as possible, maximum freedom of movement within the site, control of heat, light, sound and weather in such a way that any reasonable requirement can be met using artificial or natural conditions in combination or separately, changes in structure and arrangement of amenities and facilities which become necessary to be carried out without inconvenience to users.177

Though never built, the Fun Palace project as a whole formulated an additional successful programmatic strategy for increasing the capacity of architecture as agency, one which absorbs social and cultural context through protocols of programming. However, the Architectural Brief of the Fun Palace has no illusions about the possible impact of the project:

In the meantime the problems that cause it to be posited cannot be left for the Fun Palace to solve. They are the problems inherent in the society we live and work in. The social situation gives the Fun Palace its validity and we exist inside that social situation. It must be our constant concern.178

The document frequently cited in this section reconstructs the design process of the Fun Palace, and indicates the social potential in approaching brief beyond the established models of conventional practice.

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177 Ibid., 4.
5.1.2. Program as an Interface

The design challenge of the Fun Palace was to achieve an event that lies between the publicity of open space and the intimacy of architectural enclosure. The Fun Palace was intended to be a space in constant motion and continuous change. Instead of creating a static space, the dynamicity of the event-environments was a response to a “social and philosophical issue of the Fun Palace viewed as a system for encouraging the creative behavior that is necessary in an automated society.”

The Fun Palace created a set of events, which intended to increase the agency of the user (Fig. 9). In other words, by merging work and leisure:

The Fun Palace makes no claim to any sort of Universal tool. In fact it modestly makes few claims at all in this critical respect. It stresses throughout the positive values of its plans and potential to enable the individual to find the enjoyment that arises from using time instead of filling it and the self-fulfillment that comes from controlling environment instead of being crushed by it.

The Fun Palace provides a new understanding of theater, in which the user is simultaneously an actor and spectator. The emancipation impulse of the project lies in granting physical access and immediate use of a set of functions and social procedures which lie outside normal life routines for the majority of people.

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In early stages of project development, Price’s design challenge was how to develop a scaffolding capable of accommodating intimate spaces, as well as the needs of a larger assembly.
of people (Fig. 10). Another issue was how to reconcile the necessity of structural stability with the fulfillment of the proclaimed programmatic flexibility and indeterminacy. The condition of continual flux and interchangeability was expressed in the easily transformable roofing panels. Mainly made of structural steel, Fun Palace was made additionally flexible with “inflatable plastic and standardized aluminium modular units which could be positioned and relocated anywhere within the overall structure.”\(^{181}\) The spatial organization was highly unhierarchical; the ground level was equally accessible from all sides.

The specific technical procedure was a “punch card system to track and allot resources for various activities in order to avoid programming conflicts.”\(^{182}\) As Mathews explains:

The center of the card would be punched to indicate specific activities, while the perimeter holes would be punched to indicate the size, location, quality, and quantity of the activity. A second system would also record usage patterns and allocate resources such as TV and communications requirements, noise output, acoustic requirements, light levels, probable uses of electricity, heating and air conditioning.\(^{183}\) These programmatic methods, while they illustrate the potential of thinking about architecture differently, would reduce user orientation to participation, neglecting a wide number of sensual spatial experiences.\(^{184}\) In other words:

In particular the issues of philosophy and theory and principle involved in determining what is likely to \textit{induce happiness} and what role the organization should play in relation to the leisure of an automated society [emphasis added].\(^{185}\) It was immediately clear to the Fun Palace Cybernetics Subcommittee that the intense programmatic orientation of the Fun Palace is severely compromised by number of factors:

\(^{182}\) Ibid., 118.
\(^{183}\) Ibid.
The McKinnon Woods brought up an interesting and important point related to the degree of freedom assigned to choice of activities in a finite system. Suppose that the Fun Palace, one evening, has a play with an audience of let us say 100 people and (no other space than the auditorium being available) a group of say 200 people wish to indulge in or watch a football game. Does the football game (on democratic grounds) oust the play?

The point is far from trivial. In the first place it makes us either subscribe to or reject the view that human activity is quantised, like the trigger mechanisms of a motor response hierarchy. If we accept this view then the quantization is spatial and temporal. An activity has a spatial location and a temporal span. Hence the tools for the activity, for play acting or football playing, must be allocated with a span attached, so that once allocated the relevant contained activity can be completed.

Despite problems in its logic, the Fun Palace established some parameters which later projects we will analyze in this study would further develop: interaction with the user and a changing and constantly evolving form of architectural space. Above, all it provided a conceptual programmatic framework, through the use of cybernetic theory, for a new way of programming architecture and “architectural events”.

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5.1.3. Program as a Memory Device

The changeable nature of Price’s notion of program and the consequent application of various computational protocols is not reduced to the interaction with the user and the building. It lies in the capacity of program to record different human experiences and demands. In that sense, the program of the Fun Palace had its own memory, capable of collecting and recording diverse social experiences. However, what is possibly its strongest facet is simultaneously the shortcoming which most compromised the entire Fun Palace endeavor, reducing it to a “vast social control system,”187 that favors one social pattern over another.


Stanley Mathews provides a detailed analysis of the document entitled “Organizational Plan as Programme.” The Fun Palace is known for its application of certain cybernetic procedures, which, as Mathews has indicated, deeply compromised the project’s initial design agenda (Fig. 11). Treating human experiences as raw material for computation, overall trends were established, and certain use patterns were given “prioritized value,”¹⁸⁸ which provoked changes in the functional organization of the Fun Palace. Mathews points out that “this modification would be readjusted by a feedback cycle, by comparing people arriving (unmodified people) to people leaving (modified people).”¹⁸⁹

Though applied with only limited success, program as a tool for interacting with the user and recording users’ usage patterns essentially turned the architectural program into a living organism, a biological form which in return facilitates a notion of architecture which blends with the environment. Once social conditions have rendered a certain use obsolete, it should simply cease to exist. In the following section I will give a more detailed overview of this strategy.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.
¹⁸⁹ Ibid.
5.1.4. Program as an “Evolutionary” Diagram

Price’s innovative approach is indicative of a new condition of urbanity, characterized by generic anonymity, which he sees as potentially conducive to uninhibited human action in space. The city, interpreted as a space that flows without easily perceivable borders, is seen as the natural venue for architectural action. In other words:

The city today works in a constipated way, in spite of its physical and architectural limitations. The legacy of redundant buildings and the resultant use patterns acts as a straitjacket to total use and enjoyment [emphasis added].

Price’s architecture not only introduces a number of themes; it contemplates them in a way that is synthetic and innovative at the same time, and above all is illustrative of the urban condition itself. Price’s work explores the notions of historical models of the city, the condition of the modern city and the periphery–center relationship. A number of the architectural strategies Price developed are elaborately discussed in Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom. They move beyond the physical interventions that predetermine the future layout of space, and see potential in the discrete nature of the city, underlying the necessity of providing public space. These architectural approaches rely on the potential of computation to deal with complex urban issues in a way that is rational, yet conducive to unrestrained human action in space. Architecture is read as a part of the urban cycles of reclamation, reuse, and eventually as an event par excellence which leaves little or no physical trace on the urban tissue of the metropolis, once its original role is rendered irrelevant:

In-built flexibility or its alternative—planned obsolescence, can be satisfactorily achieved only if the time factor is included as an absolute design factor in the total

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190 The models for that kind of condition would be Los Angeles (USA) or Milton Keynes (England).
design process. Such calculated awareness of the time factor related to the enclosing of activities and their inter-relationship must extend to an assessment of the valid life span of the total complex assessed primarily in socio/urban terms.\textsuperscript{192}

In order to accommodate that kind of approach, one can read the development of the notion of program as an evolutionary diagram in the work of Cedric Price. The program of the Fun Palace and its consequent procedures follow a model of knowledge which is self-replicating and changeable with and in response to user experience: “biological evolution proceeds by feedback between environment and organism, involving variation and a large amount of death. Growth of individual organisms involves death also of unwanted cells but to a smaller extent.”\textsuperscript{193} Clearly, from the outset, the Fun Palace was envisioned as a living organism: “In the FPP, the decay of interest in a particular unit or activity corresponds to death, and assists evolutionary development [emphasis added].”\textsuperscript{194} The essence of the Fun Palace was its program. This was an eminently architectural concept, that is to say, a concept which generates form, an interface designed by an architect but activated by the user.

The program is devised to “develop as a self-organizing system. The genetic code of the agenda is provided to initiate the evolutionary process and the constraints are not severe enough to inhibit it altogether.”\textsuperscript{195} The simultaneity of different architectural experiences was supported by a number of large-scale television screens, bridging the geographic distance and adding to the identity sense of the place.\textsuperscript{xliii}

Price’s ethical orientation demanded a new set of architectural strategies, both in terms of the urban level of the city, and in terms of how architecture reacts to the city context and the

nature of architecture itself. One of those strategies is indeterminacy and application of organizational models (cybernetics) for instance, that would allow for more spontaneity in the use of space. As Littlewood and Cedric Price state, the project poses:

the problem of replanning the city [as] ... one of scrapping or adapting the existing forms to enable this fuller, more random and sophisticated use of urban facilities, while ensuring that any new work will not in its turn create an inappropriate physical discipline in the future.\(^\text{196}\)

In the conceptualization phase, the Fun Palace was interpreted as a reaction to and part of planning objectives of the Lea Valley masterplan, essentially an additional tool for rethinking and activating public and green park zones.\(^\text{197}\) More importantly, it offered a set of ideas about how to treat and deal with dire conditions of deteriorating economic growth; sites considered included rivers, railway sites, commercial areas, and pre-war housing. Multiple proposals, in varying stages and to varying degrees, sought to exploit the deteriorating industrial condition in a way that would promote a new, socially responsible aesthetics.

The concept of chance and coincidence, and the model of time, all establish a framework in which socially transformative action is not paternalistically imposed, but facilitates a process initiated by the user.\(^\text{198}\) Time and its consequent definition of space, the notions of fragmented totality, and culture as a vehicle that contests and disrupts lived social realities all form the conceptual crux of Fun Palace. The notions of time as employed by Cedric Price move beyond the canonic rules and the reductive modernist aesthetics which came as a result of the mechanized production procedures, into exploiting time as an evolving mechanism integral to


\(^{197}\) See Matthews, From Agitprop to Free Space: Architecture of Cedric Price, 82-141.

\(^{198}\) The program of the Fun Palace was time-sensitive (Camden town the change of use through time from place for children in the morning to old people’s meeting place in the afternoon).
architectural program and project. Postulated as such, Price’s architecture is capable of utilizing industrial aesthetics in a different and more productive manner:

The ephemeral nature of the architecture is a major element in the design, making possible the use of materials and techniques normally excluded from the building industry. Charged static-vapor zones, optical barriers, warm-air curtains and for-dispersal plant are some of the methods employed together with vertical and horizontal lightweight blinds.\[^{199}\]

Time can almost be appropriated by the community in reinventing its use and unleashing its liberating potential:

A new attitude to the use of time and space. A springboard for the needs and objectives of the community. A space to try new skills, waste time pleasurably, extend interests.\[^{200}\]

In the design development, a number of drawings had a time period indicating physical distance, which has been extensively covered in recent scholarship, in particular that of Mathews. Time as the constituent part of the edifice enables architectural space to be read as a space of continual flux, where time is translated into an almost physically palpable entity. Architecture understood in and with relationship with time is architecture which lives with the community, follows its technological advances, and ceases to exist when it no longer serves its initial role, without remaining a burden which fabricates false “historical” memory and preservationist agendas. In that sense, Price’s approach to program as “evolutionary” diagram enables architecture to function in the rhythm of a society.

While never realized, Price’s Fun Palace project can be considered successful not only in promoting a new idea—the program as an organism which acts as a catalyst—but also in incorporating the understanding of site and context in that same idea, eventually ethically


interrogating and questioning them. Site is considered not only in terms of its physical limits or the volumetric constraints of the context, but as something that produces architecture as a simultaneously dissipating and concentrated matter at the crossroads of urban infrastructures. Price’s architecture achieves interaction between the interior and the exterior, as a catalyst of public use of space in different and unexpected ways, moving from the concentrating mass of human gathering to the articulated mediation and interaction with the urban landscape.

However, what is thought to be the most important disciplinary legacy of the Fun Palace actually was yet another significant hurdle preventing its realization:

The Fun Palace project, in my mind, cannot be built, or function, or survive unless it is realized against this background. It must be seen as *an integral part of a national program for social development* starting with education for life in schools and running throughout the life-history of man. At the same time the Fun Palace as it is programmed and envisaged will be firstly a ‘laboratory of fun’—a place for experiment and research which will feed back material germane to its own potential development and to the field of social change at large [emphasis added]. 201

If the Fun Palace indeed was not successful in curing the “ills” of the society, at least it added a new dynamics to the debate about the role of leisure and nature of education.202 The social milieu was effectively utilized to articulate the program of the Fun Palace; and by offering a valid alternative to the system of education, through *architectural* means, it had some at least some success in changing it.

This chapter has examined a number of issues that the Fun Palace initiated and which are important to the overall concern of this thesis. Its introduction of computational knowledge, though quite mechanistic, produced an understanding of program and architecture as a living organism that, in interaction with the user, seeks to overcome the control mechanisms inherent

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202 Mathews, *From Agit-Prop to Free Space.*
in built space. The following chapter will elaborate on another project by Price, which dealt more comprehensively with the same issues and introduced a new level of architectural thinking— that of the program’s capacity to learn from the interaction with the user, even producing architectural layouts in its own right.

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xxvii London’s Institute for Contemporary Arts, Independent Group and the exhibition “This is Tomorrow” (1956) all provided different venues which eventually opened up ways for rethinking art practices and questioning architectural tradition.

xxviii The chronology of Fun Palace was extensively covered by Stanley Mathews in From Agitprop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price. Initial discussions between Price and Littlewood were dated back to 1962, though her first ideas of Fun Palace could be traced back to 1961. Fun Palace was a set of spatial procedures which could be applied with varying degrees of success to different locations and contexts. Camden Town Pilot Project related to the project size of Mill Meads in 1:20 ratio. (See Fun Palace, Biological Models (dated April 21 1965, signed by R.J.G. on March 25 1965), In Fun Palace Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR1995:0188:525:003.).

xxix The story of Fun Palace starts with a brief and unexpected encounter in early 1962 between Cedric Price and theater director Joan Littlewood (1914-2002). (Stanley Matthews, From Agit-prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price (London: Blackdog, 2007), 63.) Littlewood’s almost obsessive pursuit of the idea of theater as a highly motivated and politically charged act found an ally in Price’s concept of architecture as process-based and process-oriented activity. Building on Brechtian premises, Littlewood saw the act of theater as an act of communication, the one that moves beyond the “sanctified” space of a socially codified cultural experience, in favor of a socially conscious and unsettling event which puts the viewer in a position of questioning, a position that does not appease and does not conform, to say at least. The Fun Palace would wed those intentions with Price’s notion of programmatic indeterminacy, flexibility and changeability. Additionally, Fun Palace was not only a response to the particular agendas of both Price and Littlewood, but came as reaction to the constantly shifting social and cultural landscapes of post-war Britain. (Stanley Mathews, From Agit-prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price (London: Blackdog, 2007), 124.)

x x In requalifying Fun Palace in terms of the current architectural discourse, several important issues are raised. How and to what extent can one analyse a project that spans over a decade at least, and is usually referred as a “kit of parts”? Fun Palace is understood by some as the translation of the Situationist International agenda into the buildable architectural construction. More importantly, Fun Palace as a concept and an idea interrogates the image as a “Marxist notion of fetishist commodity”(In Giorgio Agamben, “Violence and Hope in the Last Spectacle,” in Situationists: Art, Politics, Urbanism, Barcelona: Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, ACTAR, 1996. 73-81., 73.).

xxi In the structural plan developed by Frank Newby, side aisles were 18.3 m wide, the central bay had span of 73.2 m, the total length of the frame was 237.7 m, and the width, 109.7 m. (In Matthews, From Agit-prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price (2007), 77.)

xxii It also contained a number of amenities such as the “bubbling wall,” the “flying men,” the “horse game” and “climb the tree of evolution.”
“an auditorium (that served as a nursery school in the morning and gathering place for the elderly in the afternoon), a theatre, concert hall, lecture hall/cinema.” (In Mathews, *From Agit-prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price* (2007), 127.)

According to Mathews, this remarkably turbulent time of British history was crucial to the formation of Cedric Price’s notion of architecture. On the same track were a highly developed social agenda, and very intense social expectations in the society in general. Such a context was crucial to Price’s questioning the position of architecture as a discipline and its possible performance. More importantly, it gave a basis for a discipline to rethink its basic precepts and procedures in delivering and answering those demands.

Additionally, at least in historical terms, Fun Palace certainly belongs to a tradition of “pleasure domes, follies, public gardens, music halls.” (Stanley Mathews, *From Agit-prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price* (London: Blackdog, 2007), 72.).

To a certain extent, Fun Palace repeats a set of issues that were initiated at the Festival of Britain. Organized at the former bombed-out site, the Festival was supposed to be emblematic of the overall rejuvenation efforts and the forward thinking orientation of the entire society. (Alan Powers, *Britain: Modern Architectures in History*). The Festival promoted an atmosphere of progress, and architecture was seen as a vehicle of learning, something that could complement and enliven both leisure time and leisure activities. Architecture coupled and integrated with engineering, sculpture and painting was seen as a setting for joyful, animated and educationally relevant play. (Alan Powers, *Britain: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion, 2007), 84.)

In *From Agitprop to Free Space: Architecture of Cedric Price* Stanley Matthews gives a comprehensive account of the social and cultural conditions of the post-war Britain. Great Britain came out of World War II as part of the Allied force which won the war, but eventually lost its position of preeminence in international affairs. The disintegration of the empire was followed by equally parallel reshuffling of domestic affairs. (See Stanley Mathews, *From Agitprop to Free Space: Architecture of Cedric Price*) Synchronously, the restructuring of the world economy, relocation of the heavy industry facilities combined with the ever more restricted access to natural resources, caused not only high unemployment rates, but also revealed all the inadequacies of the educational system to provide a work force that is capable of adapting quickly and efficiently to the rapidly changing conditions of the market and global economy. (See: Stanley Mathews, *From Agitprop to Free Space: Architecture of Cedric Price*) The traumatic experience of World War II was not only lethal to the Britain’s standing in world affairs, even more so it decisively reshaped the social ordering and class structure of the society. Open hostility towards the visible presence of class distinctions, coupled with the promises of the Welfare State were driving forces behind the atmosphere that promoted equal opportunity; eventually giving incentive to the context which later proved conducive to many socially committed carriers. (See Stanley Matthews, *From Agit-prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price.*)

On the utopian impulse of the Fun Palace, Michael Myers in a letter to Cedric Price writes: “... [In] ... the *Journal of the Royal College of Art* ... My intention is to present an analysis of contemporary Utopian thought ... And such is the case, I believe, with Joan Littlewood’s project for a Fun Palace in which you are involved. With your consent with your advice, I hope to do something on the social implications of the scheme, perhaps you could even contribute something on the project yourself?” (In Michael Myers to Cedric Price, dated October 9th 1963, In Fun Palace Folio C.P.A.-C.C.A., DR1995:0188:525:005).

Fun Palace’s lack of constant and steady financial support compelled the team to use the social promises of Fun Palace as a marketing tool. In other words: “In this there is a further dilemma. In this utilitarian world one must demonstrate social Use to attract financial support, which seems to give many projects a therapeutic or purifying appearance. It seems unlikely that anyone will be attracted to the Fun Palace because it is good for them and any insistence on the pathological side of the base-situation
automatically alienates potential clients. But only insistence on the pathological aspect is likely to convince the money men that the Fun Palace is anything but a wanton and willful irrelevant extravagance. Only concentration on the pathological side will establish the first priorities of activity and spending that will enable the organizers to select from among the multitude of potentials and possibilities.” (In “The Fun Palace” (received 13.3.1966), 3. In Fun Palace Folio- C.P.A., C.C.A., DR1995:0188:525:005.)

“Such new buildings, and the whole environments which young architects are supporting, are what is known as ‘kit-of-parts’ architecture: factory-made plastic and metal sections and rooms which can be moved around to make any shape or size. The new generation backs them because they accept change and feel that buildings must be easily altered, expanded even dissembled and moved around. They feel this new architecture is already here in pre-fabricated housing and system-built schools. And they say that the most interesting idea of 1964 is the proposed Fun Palace.

In a way it’s a light-hearted idea. Its architects and backers say it could change its shape, move its rooms around, and look different every day. But their generation also see the Fun Palace as the prototype for environments of the future.” (In Priscilla Chapman, “The Year in Design,” The Sunday Times Magazine, 27 December 1964)

The concept of Fun Palace not only critically reacts to conventional notions of theater and usual educational establishment, but also what is perceived as an avant-garde school (Summerhill). The Fun Palace reacts not only to institutionally formalized procedures of subjugation, but also to the network of control mechanisms which are formed within the human group: “Experiments with ‘free schools,’ though useful, have not been outstandingly successful, mainly because the freedom is illusory: the children were much more influenced by other children of the same age, than by the tolerant organizers, owing to their compulsion to conform with contemporaries. For example, in two such schools I have inspected (Summerhill and Burgess Hill) the untidiness and chaos in the rooms was unbelievable. A study suggested that children who wished to tidy were prevented by the social pressure of the others.” (In Biological Model, 3. In Fun Palace Folio- C.P.A., C.C.A., DR1995:0188:525:003.)

In other words, “the theater is a place to understand the world by seeing and hearing.” (In Pérez-Gómez, Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics (2006), 49.) In historical terms, “Renaissance architects, patrons, and writers such as Giangioerio Trissino, Daniele Barbaro, his close friend Andrea Palladio, and Sebastian Serlio (to mention only a few) believed that the theater had a special revelatory power.” (In Pérez-Gómez, Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics (2006), 52-53.) Alberto Pérez-Gomez explains: “As Richard Sennett has shown, even social conventions for public interaction in the large European cities emphasized the theatricality of everyday life. Indeed, architecture and theater became almost equivalent.” (In Pérez-Gómez, Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics (2006), 59.)

The project of the Fun Palace contributes to rethinking the distinctions between public and private space, and the number of ways that relationship can enhance the coherence of the project. For instance, the Camden town project exploits the varying level of public and private by perforating the architectural distinctions between the solid and the void, between exterior and interior.

“a series of large closed-circuit television and information screens which will project events taking place in other parts of the Fun Palace and in other parts of the world. It will be possible to watch miners at work, footballers training, the Monkey House at the Yoo. The screens will also project a continuous stream of local and world news. The visitor can enjoy a sense of identity with the world around him. There will be a variety of restaurants and coffee houses where the visitor can simply spend time or can eat, can try new foods whilst watching news-screens or reading the papers or watching others move about the complex.” (In The Fun Palace, 7. In Fun Palace Folio- C.P.A., C.C.A., DR1995:0188:525:001.)
Chapter 6. Generator:

Program as a Heuristic Memory Device

Cedric Price’s Generator Project (1976-79, 1989-90) is a design concept which integrated substantive technological elements, using them as a platform to generate an architectural framework (Fig. 12). This project represents an important phase in Price’s professional search for a comprehensive embrace of computational logic and furthers his exploration of the possibilities of responsive architecture and impermanent structures, offering an architectural contemplation on a more productive use of free time. An important role in developing supporting programming procedures was played by John and Julia Frazer, at that time professors at Ulster School of Architecture and partners in Autographics, company known for exploring the applicability of different computational procedures to the field of architecture.


Generator provided an architectural context for users, be they individual or group, to create and explore spaces that they find most suitable to their needs. The heuristic nature of Generator’s program was a basis for an architectural system which not only reacts to the user
input but gives suggestions and plans in its own right. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the Generator project and tools proposed by John and Julia Frazer—programs 1, 2, 3, and 4—that enabled architecture’s and program’s learning capacity, in order to give a better understanding of the development of the idea of the program in the work of Cedric Price.

Generator was “acknowledged as the first ‘intelligent building,’”\(^\text{203}\) one that ‘knew itself’ and even ‘dreamt’ cybernetically.”\(^\text{204}\) Although Generator exploits many of the Fun Palace’s design tools, it does so in a new and more profound manner. This project was based on an understanding of architecture as a system of learning which not only interacts with the user and the “architect,” but also constructs a system of knowledge that evolves over time as a consequence of this interaction (Fig. 18). Generator was meant to be a meticulously crafted entity which lives silently within a landscape and constitutes an urban space in its own right, and is a digitally driven device for play and self-discovery. It illustrates the architectural approach Price perpetuated through a number of his projects, and is the one that most directly defines architecture as an environment and network, designed to work as a field that motivates unfettered human activity. The architecture of the Generator is a modular architecture with a self-generating logic of its own (Fig. 13).

Generator was envisioned as a fleeting disruption in the landscape, a multifaceted and ephemeral event. Price’s incisive way of sketching seems to convey the spatial qualities and fleeting effects of the complex. In strictly architectural terms, Generator was a grid supported...
by a set of foundations that would accommodate regenerative architectural concepts through the use of walkways, crane and screens (Fig. 13, Fig. 15).\textsuperscript{205} The architecture of Generator is in constant motion and evolution, with few points of permanence, almost a construction site exploiting the visual appeal of the modular formal language (Fig. 14).

![Figure 14 Generator Sketch. Source: Cedric Price- Work II. London: Cedric Price and the Architectural Association, 1984, 94.](image)

Gonçalo Furtado’s dissertation and book on Generator give a detailed overview of the project, providing important insights which originated not only from materials in Cedric Price Archive at the Canadian Center for Architecture, but also the private archives of John and Julia Frazer. Generator was designed to be situated on a site at the Florida and Georgia border, as part of the industrial facility for the Gilman Paper Company. The whole compound had modest infrastructure, with houses and stables.

Generator was developed for a private client. The owner, Howard Gilman, had a keen interest in architecture and kept a collection of architectural avant-garde drawings in his possession.\textsuperscript{206} The company was originally located in Vermont, but later on, in the 1930s, it was

\textsuperscript{205} The same “tartan-grid” was used for drainage of the site; the width of the grid itself was 300 mm.

moved to the border of Florida and Georgia, a region with ample forests and wood resources.\(^{207}\)

The site consists of a slightly irregular rectangle which is divided by the access route into two triangular areas. Essentially a modular and evolving structure, Generator expresses the immanent attributes of Price’s architectural work. The general building structure was timber construction, with a number of additional modular elements enclosing and adding form to the space. Every detail of the entire structure was subject to meticulous considerations: special emphasis was placed on the impact of insects and climate, especially the effects of sun shadows. The continuing flexibility of the complex was supported by the moving crane, and modular frames, which fitted into basic spatial structure with dimensions of 3.6 x 3.6 x 3.6 m (Fig. 13).\(^{208}\)

The usage of the compound was supported by a number of walkways (Fig. 15).\(^{xlv}\)

The Generator could be conditionally labeled as a theme park, but without any recognizable highly commercialized iconography. Price maintains a critical stance to the established logic of that typology, “privileging ...a more social character,”\(^{209}\) motivated by the overall concern of promoting the role of the user beyond that of a passive consumer. The light architecture of Generator creates an urban logic by establishing a dialogue between the openness of the landscape and intimacy of the private dwelling.\(^{xlv}\) Generator is actually a field of architectural elements which, through the interaction with the user, generate an infrastructure of play and self-discovery (Fig. 16, Fig. 17). The planned occupancy of Generator was from 1 up to 1000 people. Besides workers, the compound, could be used by number of other users, specifically:

SCOPE OF INDIVIDUAL USERS: artists, architects, critics, performers, animal experts, politicians, journalists, employees immediately come to mind given the interests of the

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\(^{207}\) Ibid., 145.

\(^{208}\) Additional elements were friendly barriers, 3.6m x 2.4m in size. Their role was registering movement and indicating Generator’s presence.

\(^{209}\) Furtado (2007), 168.
creative “cell.” Too elitist? Perhaps, but by its very nature Generator will draw upon the few to express concerns that reach beyond its boundaries. (How this will be accomplished must be reserved for a discussion of technique of information gathering and dissemination). Initially, the scope of users will undoubtedly depend very much on H.G.’s preferences.210

Figure 15 Menu 25; details of SW zone- left ground level; right roof level with walkways. Source: Cedric Price- Work II (London: Cedric Price and the Architectural Association, 1984), 92.

Like the Fun Palace, Generator is an architectural entity that blends itself in and out of the environment with and through the movement of human body, simultaneously dissipating and concentrating its presence. Generator “comes into being” in reaction with the user, is a
memory-recording and memory-creating device and a field for play, supported by advanced computational tools. The design concept moves between the demands for the place of solitude and mutual exchange, between the need for privacy and the necessity of public interaction, even establishing logic of the form of the outside space. Since Generator was envisioned as a kit of parts (Fig. 17), special concern was given to the affinity of the activities as well as to the possibility of their compatibility in terms of noise levels, the level of privacy demanded by the nature of the use, and so forth.

Figure 17 Generator: Selection of Design Thoughts. Source: The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 170/71
6.1. Practicing Program: Increasing Users’ Agency

In an effort to conceive a more ethically grounded practice of architecture, Price employed a number of specific tactics for the Generator project. These tactics are program as an interface and program as a heuristic memory device. More importantly, his collaboration with John and Julia Frazer opened up a path to several original concepts employing a specific set of computational tools, together with the extensive use of microprocessors that is stressed in Furtado’s dissertation. Though Furtado provides a well-grounded account of Price’s work, he fails to discuss the notions of program in further detail. These promote an idea of program that does not replicate social conditions, but puts users in new contextual relations and circumstances, allowing them to use their time in a way that is new to their routine daily practices. In other words, as the press release stated:

The Gilman Paper Company has commissioned UK architect Cedric Price to design a complex to be known as GENERATOR to produce certain conditions that will enable individuals and groups to extend their own interests and activities.

Generator is also “a conscious effort not to refer to any other building type in order not to precondition its use,” within the overall reference system of play. In the following section I will examine Generator’s program for two of its most salient feature, interactivity and capacity for memory.

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211 In order to facilitate the open-endedness of the program, a number of questionnaires were used.
213 Furtado (2007), 192. Initial phases of the project were marked by extensive surveying of the interests of possible users in order to define and determine beginning functions.
Figure 18 Initial design network with three starting points- people 1, place 5, finance 13. Source: Cedric Price- Works II (London: Cedric Price and the Architectural Association, 1984), 92.
6.1.1. Program as an Interface

As in most of Price’s schemes, the primary challenge was how to accommodate an open-ended program—one whose conceptual strength is in its lack of explicit definitiveness.\textsuperscript{214} Generator was designed to be not only responsive to the needs of the user, but also interacts with the user in a manner which resembles a model of artificial life, and is capable of not only adapting to variable input, but learning from it.\textsuperscript{xlviii} Price refers to the program of the Generator as a set of “menus,” which satisfy the changing “appetites” of the user (Fig. 15). Special consideration was given to the affinities of the possible activities (film show, seminar, disco, lecture preparation, yoga, reading, singing, quarter rehearsal).\textsuperscript{xlix} The project was an early conceptualization of how architecturally and ethically to deal with constantly shifting contexts:

   "instantaneous architectural response to a particular problem is too slow. Architecture must concern itself continually with the socially beneficial distortion of the environment. Like medicine it must move from the curative to the preventive. Architecture should have little to do with problem solving. Rather it should create desirable conditions and opportunities hitherto thought possible. With this intention the client asked me to investigate whether architecture could help in providing such conditions for the individual and the group from both inside and outside the company. ... The Generator was born— an architectural complex with no previous title and predefined use, only a desired end effect."\textsuperscript{215}

The significant attention Price’s work gives to user demands is certainly motivated by his overall orientation toward architectural practice, which is to provide conditions for unrestricted human action in space.\textsuperscript{1} Generator, more than the Fun Palace, utilized the latest technological

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{214}] John and Julia Frazer proposed “program” as an interface in following terms: “Program 3: takes the form of an interactive interrogation of changing requirements of the users. They are invited to make proposals for improving or modifying the organization of the site. This is intended to both assist in the actual reorganization of the site and is stimulus to the users to remind them that the site can and should be continually reorganized. To encourage the users to be involved in this design process an intelligent modeling kit has been built which allows them to locate the major structural units and too change cladding panels and other components as appropriate.” (In J. H. Frazer, J. M. Frazer, and P.A. Frazer, Draft paper, “Intelligent Physical Three-dimensional Modeling Systems,” dated 12/03/80, received March 18, 1980, 10., In Generator Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR1995:0280:651:004:003.)
  \item[\textsuperscript{215}] Cedric Price- Works II. (London: Cedric Price and the Architectural Association, 1984), 92-93.
\end{itemize}
developments, providing a more comprehensive framework for its “interactive” programming, and the consequent architecture of free time.

6.1.2. Program as a Heuristic Memory Device

The most important programmatic innovation of Generator is the concept of boredom, which means that after a certain period of time, if Generator does not receive any input from the user, it will rearrange itself. In that sense, John and Julia Frazer defined two programs:

Program 1: takes the form of a perpetual architect. It embodies the rules for placing the components and structural units and has necessary data to draw them. In accordance with instructions it produces new drawings showing the implications of proposed changes and produces schedules for the crane driver to realize the changes on site.216

Program 2: maintains an inventory recording the location of all components and places of equipment distributed about the site. It keeps check on future booking and alternation requirements showing up definitions in the inventory of equipment and also highlights any equipment or facilities which are being rarely used or over stretched. This scheduling and inventory package also produces feedback on the effective utilization of the site and facilities.217

The prominent role John and Julia Frazer played in the process of Generator was also indicative of the new sensibility in the use of computational tools. In “A Conceptual Seeding Technique for Architectural Design” Frazer argues:

There are no longer any good reasons for simulating primitive manual design methods by computer and ... it is an appropriate time for the development of a new generation of programs which allow a greater complexity of design concept. A conceptual seeding technique is described which allows the designer to crystallize a complex concept for general application and then develop and manipulate this concept into a specific building form in response to a particular problem.218


217 Ibid.

The project utilizes the architectural device of program as a form generative tool, which by responding to the input of the user constantly rearranges itself. Essentially, the program for the Generator works as a heuristic memory device. John and Julia Frazer proposed:

Program 4: is the most powerful program on the suite. It is able to take suggested activities and arrange the site to best meet these requirements in accordance with simple rules of crane lift, structural spans and circulation. It can take an existing organization of the site and show the quickest and most convenient modifications to meet changing requirements or it is capable of responding to data from program 2 and criticisms and comments of the users from program 3 to suggest improved organization and better utilization of spaces. Finally, the program has been provided with concept of boredom and in the event of the site not being re-organized or changed for some time the computer starts generating unsolicited plans and improvements.²¹⁹

In other words, it reaffirms the notion of architecture as the basis for learning, which is a motivating force behind Generator’s existence and evolution.²⁵ In that regard, Price’s architecture provides a rare example of how critically to engage the possibilities which emerged under a tide of digitalization. By embracing a computational logic, Generator creates framework and network for the physical and unmediated experience of space.

Two other projects discussed in this thesis, Fun Palace and Japan Net, were situated in the urban setting. Their identity was forged in relationship to that context. On the other hand, Generator, although designed for a natural setting, generates an urban logic in its own right.³³ Generator is a meditation on the city as a place of social encounters. The design concepts of Generator are dealing with the space in multilateral terms, absorbing the flow of time.³³ However, taking into account the insularity of the site, Price was aware of necessity of a “moderator” for the entire compound. The Generator scheme proposed the two roles of Factor and Polariser. A Polariser was to function as person in charge of marketing, while a Factor worked as an instigator of different architectural layouts.

The concept of boredom, coupled with the idea of the Polariser and the Factor contributed to establishing the changing nature of Generator’s program, albeit different in character than in the case of Fun Palace. As in most of Price’s projects, the Generator’s conceptual strength was also its great weakness. The demand for an architecture that responds to and “anticipates” users’ wants is actually a call to rethink architectural artifacts as solidified and definite.\textsuperscript{li} Price’s social agenda and his notions of interactive architecture demanded a new basis for architectural work: Generator maps the social potential and imaginative capacities of its architecture which not only exploit, but more importantly incorporate advanced models of computation. In doing so, Price’s work promises to deliver a more wholesome future. In explicating Button Hole Project (1981), Price noted:

Architecture as a device for extending human delight, and happiness is a weak alternative to many other less expansive artifacts. Only when people are grouped does architecture become a tool for social well-being comparable with such alternatives as good health, ease of travel, and free-choice communications. Security and shelter are often cited as the domain of domestic architecture, although a healthy bank balance and hotel credit cards can provide appetizing alternatives. However, if designed to be sufficiently boisterous yet loose, architecture can also provide a range of artificial constructs that encourage human patterning in range and variety that natural conditions cannot match. The house is not a pre-set ordering mechanism for a happy life. Architecture is not necessarily responsive to the free-willed fluctuation of love, enmity, boredom, and jealousies that accompany the ever-changing human growth pattern. The house is as much related to isolation and solitude as to kinship, friendship and conviviality. However, the provision of a physically protected matrix for a voluntary group of people can produce — in architectural form — a house but not necessarily a home. As householders become increasingly prepared for and capable of changing their houses for personal reasons such as affluence or old age, the role of the house as a long-term adaptable living box becomes less important than its performance as a twenty-four-hour living toy [emphasis added].\textsuperscript{220}

This chapter, by analyzing the concept of boredom and interactive nature of Generator’s program through the specific techniques provided by John and Julia Frazer — programs 1, 2, 3, and 4 — traced the development of the programmatic ideas that were initiated through

different phases of the Fun Palace project. It showed the qualitative change in those ideas by pointing out the *heuristic* nature of the program in the case of Generator. The interaction with the user was not limited to assembling and coding the data on use, but the program produced suggestions in its own right. Exerting an impact on the system would provide immediate feedback, informing the nature of that interaction in a new way. Architecture was seen as an aid to self-betterment through learning and was established as an artificial logical system, capable of thinking, at least to some degree, *creatively*. While Fun Palace and Generator are important projects in the development of Price’s ideas, they do not completely portray Price’s approach to program. Therefore, the next chapter will examine a third project Japan Net, which adds a decisive component in Price’s “theory” of program, as a tool that exploits computational knowledge and communication networks with the aim of fostering direct human interaction, eventually enhancing users’ spatial agency.
This constantly recurring theme of pulsating mutuality between the architectural act and the environment is consequently elaborated through the use of different ceilings. The possible qualities and charm of the Generator is the grid which accents the presence and absence of the modular units.

Through a number of sketches, Price contemplated the construction of joints and the use of possible materials. Price also provided a number of analyses of the impacts of shadow patterns. Also, special emphasis and consideration was given to habitus and character of the woods which encloses the compound, as well as to adverse factors (insect, rainfall, temperature fluctuations) through the year. The grid simultaneously made possible the drainage of the site. Screens (3.6 m x 2.4 m) were supported from top and bottom, or either.

One of the continuing themes of modern architecture, the relationship between exterior and interior, found a new interpretation in the project of Generator, where architectural elements coalesce in the changing intensities of the place.

“Further, the design goal is nearly always underspecified and the ‘controller’ is no longer the authoritarian apparatus which this purely technical name commonly brings to mind. In contrast the controller is an odd mixture of catalyst, crutch, memory and arbiter. These, I believe, are the dispositions a designer should bring to bear upon his work (when he professionally plays the part of a controller) and these are the qualities he should embed in the systems (control systems) which he designs.” (In Gordon Pask. “The Architectural relevance of Cybernetics,” in Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era, ed. Neil Spiller (London: Phaidon, 2002), 82. Originally published in Architectural Design, 1969.)

“Our model will derive order from its environment and be controlled by a symbiotic relationship with its inhabitants and that environment. It knows the coded instructions for its own development and is thus, in a limited sense, conscious. It can anticipate the outcome of its actions and therefore can be said to have some intelligence. All the parts of the model cooperate and in that sense it can be considered as an organism, but it will only fully exist as such if it is a member of an evolving system or organisms interacting with each other on the very edge of chaos, where all living things emerge, and it will inevitably share some characteristics of primitive life forms. And from this chaos will emerge order: order not particular, peculiar, odd or contrived, but order generic, typical, natural, fundamental and inevitable—the order of life.” (In John Frazer. “A Natural Model for Architecture/ The Nature of the Evolutionary Model,” in Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era, ed. by Neil Spiller (London: Phaidon, 2002), 253. Originally published in An Evolutionary Architecture, 1995.)

Among other activities following are stated: “pick wild flowers, stroll in local craft shops, read magazines, bird watching, swimming, diving, sleep, read, play tennis, ride horses, paint, knit, listen to music, bicycle riding, embroidery, yoga, play volleyball, co counseling, learn a language.” (In Generator Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR1995:0280:651:004:003.)

But notice the trick, the designer is controlling the construction of control systems and consequently design is control of control, i.e. the designer does much the same job as his system, but he operates at a higher level in the organizational hierarchy.” (In Gordon Pask. “The Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics,” in Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era, ed. by Neil Spiller (London: Phaidon, 2002), 82.)

John and Julia Frazer to Price, on January 11 1979: “Proposal 1. (Level 1) Enhancement of package written so far. The designer works interactively placing parts from a catalogue. The machine produces checks, inventories, plans, perspectives as required …. A perpetual architect for carrying out instructions from the Polarizor. Utilizing the capability of the machine to remember rules of placing cubes etc, how to move them, how to draw them and so forth. Produces drawings to show implications of changes, drawings for crane driver or whatever … Factor … could act as a perpetual functional critic or commentator … A Game
to be played by the users on site to stimulate the idea that the site could be reorganized. Could be linked with proposal 3 to make suggestions to the Factor... Could be extended to allow the player to make suggestions for improving or modifying any other site or building ... Morphogenetic program which takes suggested activities and arranges the elements on the site to meet the requirements in accordance with a set of rules. Could take existing plan and show best or most convenient modification at any particular level of convenience to meet a new requirement or could generate a completely new plan ... (Level 3) Is an extension of the above to include the idea that the site and the elements on it should have a life and intelligence of their own and the program would starts to generate unsolicited plans, improvements and modifications in response to user comments, records of activities, or even by building in a boredom concept so that the site starts to make proposals about rearrangements of itself if no changes are made. The program could be heuristic and improve its own strategies for site organization on the basis of experience and feedback of user response.” (In Generator Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR1995:0280:651:001.)

On predicaments of anticipating the development of the city: “To draw the complex social mechanism called City is rather like writing the tune of a sunset. Assumptions have to be made on the visual shorthand dictionary held by the observer. However, any such code has a limited life. The value of human congregation is seldom evident from the forms occupied while infrastructure of such massive congregations is increasingly invisible if not entirely without substance. The intervals of human exchange and re-enforcement within the City are increasingly dependent on available speed rather than appropriate architectural containment of such exchange. Future cities may thus enable a new province of social benefit to be derived from incompleteness, uncertainty and change.” (In Generator, City of the Future, Domain, Button Hole, Berlin 145: schemes: Cedric Price (London: Waddington Galleries, 1981), 11.)

Generator is almost embodiment of the story “The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista” by J. G. Ballard. Hugh Pearman: “Ballard dreamed up the concept for his story The Thousand Dreams of Stellavista, written in 1961. All the houses in Vermilion Sands are psychotropic, he explains. Thanks to ingenious electronics and a wonder building material called Plastex, these ‘PT’ houses are intelligent and responsive, adapting themselves literally and instantly to the needs, desires, and sheer physical presence of the inhabitants. The homes acquire a ‘pedigree’ of responses according to the character and habits of their successive occupants which are retained in a memory.” (In Generator Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR1995:0280:651:001.) “The psychotropic house is not quite with us yet, but we’ve gone a long way towards it. Truly intelligent buildings are now a practical proposition: buildings where an unbuilt network of electronic systems bears a similar relationship to the crude structure as the human nervous system does to bone and flesh. In the jargon of the business, they’re known as ‘smart buildings’ and it is in office planning that the phenomenon is most advanced.” (In Generator Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR1995:0280:651:001.)

Representing Price’s architecture was a significant challenge. Price writes: “To produce drawings for this challengingly absurd task, recognizable symbols are combined in a degree of clarity that tries to define uncertainty while relating them in size and positioning to possible preferred future degrees of recognition and importance. Thus these drawings are best viewed at varying speeds and different degrees of concentration.” (In Schemes: Generator, City of the Future, Domain, Button Hole (Berlin: Domain,1981): 11.)
Chapter 7. Japan Net:

Program(ing) (Un)mediated Human Encounters

While the Fun Palace was situated in the center of debates concerning the disparate dynamics of the modernist legacy, both Generator and Japan Net (1985-6)221 anticipated much of the development of communication technology of the coming decades (Fig. 29). Japan Net was an aberrant architectural strategy amid the postmodernist formal pursuits in rethinking the proper architectural response to different models of development and technological advancement. Unfortunately, Japan Net remained limited to an architectural meditation rather than a fully fledged scheme. However, utilizing the context of the competition for which it was developed, both Gordon Pask and Cedric Price introduced a number of important ideas on the role of community in shaping urban everyday and the possibilities of the catalytic effects of architecture, which is synthetically combined with computational platforms, communication networks, and the city.

Japan Net has received attention primarily in Cedric Price Opera, edited by Samantha Hardingham, and also received coverage in a dissertation by Gonçalo Furtado. In particular, Furtado’s dissertation introduces Japan Net as an “entry to an architectural competition for student housing in the city of Kawasaki.”222 Though important presentations of the project, both of these efforts do not relate the competition brief to the design and conceptual response by Pask and Price.

The case study of Japan Net is particularly interesting because considerable information about the context has been provided by the competition brief. The brief poses the question of

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221 The project is also known as Japnet and Kawasaki.

222 Furtado (2007), 292.
which planning strategies to employ in the face of a rapidly changing and mostly deteriorating economy in which traditional industries are losing their importance. One can argue that the competition stands at the crossroads of a great paradigm shift which could offer insight into possible uses of the telecommunication networks. Unfortunately, this competition has received little or no attention from the scholarly community. An examination of the competition process, the jury decisions (one of the jury members was Arata Isozaki), and the outcomes of the competition provides some insight into the use and application of computational tools and communication networks in fostering urban growth and the quality of public space. In this chapter the competition entry will be analyzed in relationship to the competition brief to discuss merits of the proposal itself. This analysis will provide an overview of possible strategies for socially affirmative architectural action in relation to the use of communication networks, computational tools, and the necessity for unmediated human interaction, which underlie their catalytic effect and make them possible vehicles of agency.

Kawasaki was a particularly well-suited city for imagining an urban future that would embrace digitally-driven architectures and new media in the 1980s. As an industrial town, Kawasaki was the epitome of the development most of Japan experienced after World War II. The city “underwent rapid urbanization,”\(^{223}\) eventually producing “the negative legacy ... [of] environmental pollution.”\(^{224}\) The Japan Net competition sought to address broader issues and planning concerns. The competition brief directly asked participants to provide an eminently architectural strategy for absorbing the digital into the urban fabric, which could then unleash the capacity of technology in providing communal space and facilities, eventually promoting active citizen participation. The brief not only outlined a set of problems to be dealt with by the


\(^{224}\) Ibid.
entries, it also situated those problems within Japan’s proclaimed orientation toward a society of knowledge and information. The brief calls to our attention a “transition from material-based industries to knowledge intensive industries.”225 The competition documents also offer insights into the assessment of changing social patterns (for instance, the position and roles of women in society, the changing nature of work) and shifts in demography.

The competition regulations called for a new plan for the University of Kawasaki to provide an opportunity for a research-based institution to interact with the city in a way that promotes not only economic growth but also public amenities as well: “The University of Kawasaki will respond to the intellectual needs of the citizens through their life.”226 It was hoped that The University of Kawasaki, along with its Kawasaki Institute of Technology, would provide a pluralistic vision of the future, above all, a distinctly new urban identity. The competition brief recognizes the potential in the idea of the city as informational flow, and asks for a place for unmediated human encounters. The brief asked for design of the Kawasaki Institute of Technology, Intelligent Plaza, Intelligent Network and City Festival, envisioning the establishment of “a festival which will be a prologue to the construction of the campus city of Kawasaki.”227

Close readings of the competition brief reveal a strong belief in education (lifelong, both formal and informal) and its unquestionable catalytic effects on society. The proclaimed design approach is similar to the concepts of the Potteries Thinkbelt228 in its use of communication

225 Ibid.
226 Ibid., 5.
227 Ibid.
228 The Potteries Thinkbelt (1963-1967), was a scheme for a new concept of University Campus and education; it is extensively covered in Stanley Matthews’s book From Agit-prop to Free Space: The Architecture of Cedric Price.
networks. Both Cedric Price and Gordon Pask had an established record of competence in this field in their work with the Fun Palace.

The competition submission by Price and Pask consisted of five boards (Fig. 19-23), essentially aimed at responding to the problems set by the brief. Their architectural response was driven by the determinants of the context and utilizes that same context to its fullest potential. The scheme proposed by Pask and Price uses the shifting global economic realities to articulate their approach to architecture. Price through the Japan Net project, as previously in the case of the Potteries Thinkbelt, dealt with “declining industrial sites for which he envisioned social and spatial transformations toward more flexible uses.”229

Two important parts of the architectural solution were the Intelligent Network (Fig. 19, Fig. 20, Fig. 22, Fig. 23) and Intelligent Plaza (Fig. 20, Fig. 21, Fig. 24). The Intelligent Network was a provisional network for residential purposes. In strictly architectural terms, the buildings are modular and open to a number of appropriations and possible uses and connected with moveable drawbridges (Fig. 20). Initial understanding of the project was provided by Furtado. The rearrangement and organization of architecture was driven by computational models and protocols provided by Pask. The dimensions of the residential cells were 6 x 6 x 7 meters and 6 x 6 x 12 meters (Fig. 23). The general organization of the dwellings utilizes the logic of the atrium, where initial flexibility is accommodated with drawbridges and balconies. Block units are divided into large (56 x 40 m) and small (22 x 24 m) (Fig. 22, Fig. 23). The outlines of the structure presuppose the essential logic of modular, cellular units. Organized around an atrium, they are connected by drawbridges to enhance “geographic proximity;” a system of walls was introduced in order to enhance “sensory-perceptual proximity” (Fig. 20, Fig. 22). Pask dealt with the network

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229 Aureli (2011), 103.
of Intelligent Plazas, another place where virtual and real meet in the reality of the urban everyday, through the use of animation software within the architectural framework (Fig. 24).

Figure 19 Japan Net Competition Entry Board. Poles and Postman, In Kawasaki Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR2004:0449.

Price has conceptualized architecture that corresponds to the attributes of the landscape with skeletal formal language of poles and fibers (Fig. 19), which engage technology in
a humane manner and simultaneously provide a distinctive, memorable architectural language. Price proposed the concept of the “poles,” structured in four zones to accommodate various kinds of media, including television, as has been shown by Furtado. Additionally, Price elaborated the poles’ relationship to the city, and saw them as possible generators of public space.\footnote{Furtado (2007), 299.} One of the boards presents a set of lucid remarks on the problem of the architecture of the poles and their foundation issues. The verticality of the poles is seen as conducive to conveying the visual sense of community. Price also analyzed the disposition of the poles within and in relationship to urban fabric, neighborhood parks and green zones. Urban morphology and landscape topographies were referred to as “the body of Kawasaki,” which is situated along the river, with “living scenery” and “man-made islands.” Poles were seen as a part of the common system which changes itself in reaction with the topography and built environment.\footnote{Samantha Hardingham, ed. Cedric Price- Opera (London: Academy Press, 2003), 20.} Generally, the concept was presented as a highly condensed sketch, with few particular design details. The proposal is guided by the idea of “community without propinquity,”\footnote{See Melvin W. Webber, “Order in Diversity: community without propinquity.” In The American Cities and Technology Reader: Wilderness to Wired City, edited by Gerryllyn K. Roberts. London: Routledge, 1999. 201-211. Originally published in Webber, Melvin W. “Order in Diversity: Community without Propinquity.” In Cities and Space: the future use of urban land, edited by Lowden Wingo Jr. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1963.} the approach that was initially proposed by Melvin Webber (1920-2006). Webber, a city planner and a teacher at UC Berkeley, since late 1950s and 1960s through a number of papers promoted the idea that the fundamental characteristics of urbanity are anchored in human interaction. It could not to be reduced to an aggregation of the built fabric, but the very nature of urban can be equally expressed through dispersed communities which are facilitated through telecommunication networks.\footnote{232}
Figure 20 Japan Net Competition Entry Board. Intelligent Network. In Kawasaki Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR2004:0449
7.1. Practicing Program: Increasing Users’ Agency

In Japan Net, programmatic innovation was made possible by the relatively flexible university educational system. Gordon Pask, in the *Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics* noted: “A University need not be conceived as a set of buildings around a courtyard with living accommodation and lecture theatre. The educational system might, in certain circumstances, be spatially distributed rather than localized.”

This thought indicates the potential of conceiving of architecture as a network.

The competition brief called for a “every citizen [to]... consider and agree to this idea to create a common City Identity.” Pointing out the importance of public services, it was expected to provide a network of “Intelligent Plazas” which will “meet the needs for information arising in the community and constitutes part of the University of Kawasaki, while concurrently serving as pavilions forming the core of multiple decentralized exposition sites.” Intelligent Plazas are unique hybrids—physical entities for a number of functions, combined with “representations of city dimensions (thoughts and forms)” (Fig. 24). The competition brief postulates “community” as an embodiment of the will of the citizens, in a pursuit of technologically grounded yet humanistically oriented urban condition (Fig. 21).

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235 Ibid., 7-8.
The key word for assessing the proposal is interaction, not only between users, but between architecture and users, users and machines and users and the city, where city is postulated as a complex, yet translatable medium of information. Program functions as an interface, between the user and the city through the medium of architecture. Though nominally the competition
brief calls for a university network, it is actually a set of architectural events networked with the landscape scenery, urban morphology, and digital topographies.

Figure 22 Japan Net Competition Entry Board. Intelligent Network. In Kawasaki Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR2004:0449.
7.1.1. Program as an Interface for the City

The architecture of the Japan Net project utilizes communication networks and advances in technology, essentially working as an interface, a communicative tool that blends physical and virtual space, bridging “geographical proximity” and “increasing communication potential.”

Figure 24 Sketch by Gordon Pask, Intelligent Plaza, in Kawasaki Folio: C.P.A., C.C.A., DR2004:0471.
The nature and character of the interface model was promoted through the application of cybernetics theory (Fig. 21, Fig. 25, Fig. 26, Fig. 27). Pask uses some of the cybernetic models for the arrangement of the architectural elements (Fig. 27) showing “communication proximity and flux,” for “adaptable sensory partitions,” “geographical proximity and traffic flux” for “adaptable drawbridges,” (in Kawasaki Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR2004:0449). Pask provides his explanation for the figures:

As a matter of interest, it is useful to place a hermit, a solipsist, a person with headphones and dark spectacles, a gregarious individual, a person in sensory deprivation within the coordinates of the cube of Fig. 1. This is one projection of the design. Another projection is shown in Fig. 2, which represents a torus with information flux around it in one direction and proximity flux in the other direction. Of course, there are many other possible projections. But this one directly relates the network design of (b) to the plaza design or the Architecture of Knowledge in (a) and is of some special interest.237

He further clarifies that (Fig. 26):

Illustrative points for (i) Hermit, (ii) Person with headphones and dark spectacles, (iii) sensory deprivation of solipsist, (iv) Gregarious Group, (v) Pathologically too much togetherness, (vi). Too much solitude, the solipsistic point of “flatland” (Edwin Abbot), only able to utter “me”. Again a pathological state.\textsuperscript{vii}

\textbf{Figure 26 Sketch by Gordon Pask}, In Kawasaki Folio: C.P.A., C.C.A., DR2004:0471.
Perhaps the most intriguing part of the entire submission is the studies of the Intelligent Plaza provided by Gordon Pask. Indeed, the drawings contain the promise of an architecture that is ephemeral in its effect and fleeting in its materiality. Computation models are used to enhance user participation, but also to generate architectural form. Architecture does not represent knowledge, it is knowledge. Price and Pask envisioned architecture enmeshed with different digital tools, and representations of the city, to foster different individual and collective identities.238 The design concerns of the Japan Net take into account a number of contextual restraints. The program of the Japan Net elaborates different levels of privacy and publicity.239 The interactive program of the Japan Net is clarified in the case of poles as well: “Groups or

238 The term they use is inhabitants (which is not reduced to individuals, but refers to a number of collective identities as well).
‘plantations’ of Poles will be determined by user demand and the whole network seen as a 15-
20 year socio-civic learning toy.”

Pask concludes his notes:

For the theme project PLAZA, again intelligent, I suggest the ARCHITECTURE OF
KNOWLEDGE, could say, of IDEAS or the BELEIFS or creativity, invention and the like. Since
the references were published there IS a tology, yielding aesthetically satisfying
geometries (many of them) and action. They may and should also evolve. The advantage
of this scheme is that it shows explicitly what a concept is, what an analogy is, what a
generalization is. The relevance of doing so is apparent if we focus on analogy;
conversations lead to analogies between inhabitants and generalizations about them,
the city, as here conceived, is an architectural system for encouraging conversations
that are stable (do not loose individual integrity of any inhabitant) and that evolve (lead
to a stable increase in thoughts and their concrete manifestation).

This design approach is representative of the cybernetic procedures which postulate something
that is agreed upon as real and thus influential in the modeling the overall system. The second-
order cybernetics ideas, conversation theory, and the role of the observer actually promote
spatial systems and architectural programs as interactive interfaces, which are not only
responsive to the user’s input but react to it in a way that resembles a model of artificial life.
Japan Net successfully evades the mechanistic paradigms of the Fun Palace, and promotes
architecture as a living system, beyond the literalness of the organistic paradigm, in a
continuous interactive loop with the environment and the user, which learns from that
experience and evolves with time. Pask applied the basic precept of second-order cybernetics
very confidently. As a system of knowledge, Pask implemented cybernetics as a way to mediate
common consensus in modeling the overall architectural system, where the role of the observer
has a direct impact on the changes in the system.

240 Cedric Price and Gordon Pask, Explanatory text for the Japan Net competition entry, ca. 1986, In
241 Cedric Price and Gordon Pask, Concept Notes on “Intelligent Network” and “Intelligent Plaza,” In
On the “Intelligent Plaza,” (Fig. 24) Pask writes:

There are distinct sketches (rough perspectives and sections) for the other than dynamic component of an exhibit; the Architecture of Knowledge. The topology is theoretically valid and these are some of the “basic forms” (or “fundamental elements”) of such a structure. In combination, with many others of the same kind they should represent the thoughts of a city and a computer animated image of the built structure may evolve. I conceive the structure itself as supported by a minimally built tensionally integral space frame to emphasize the global unity of thought and its local idiosyncrasies. The structure is complementary to an also theoretically defensible but, as yet, less developed kinetics.242

Pask saw an array of possibilities in hybrid forms of knowledge. This came as a result of his deep philosophical commitment and concern for the problems of epistemology. The built environment was seen simultaneously as an informational matrix and a computational model (Fig. 18).

Figure 28 Sketch by Gordon Pask, in C.P.A., C.C.A., DR2004:0471.

7.1.2. Program(ming) (Un)mediated Human Encounters

The architecture of Japan Net operates as a program which evolves with the city, and records different facets of the urban condition—public, private, different identities, different demands and space conditions—and has a memory capacity. The city of Kawasaki was hypothesized by Pask as a living organism continually shifting and rearranging itself, as an embodiment of common reason in the consensual adjustments of different agencies, spatial moves, and digitalized practices. This understanding of the city is best expressed by the following observation from Gordon Pask:

Urban planning usually extends over time, periods of years or decades and, as currently conceived, the plan is quite an inflexible specification. However, the argument just presented suggests that it need not be inflexible and that urban development could, perhaps with advantage, be governed by a process like that in the dialogue of a reactive environment (physical contact with the inhabitants giving place to an awareness of their preferences and predilections; the inflexible plan to the environmental computing machine).243

The program of Japan Net moves beyond the biological model of the Fun Palace, to create an entity that is capable of readjusting itself to different collective identities. In those terms Japan Net weds a number of conceptual approaches and responds to what can be labeled conditionally “the global competence” of the city. The proposal by Pask and Price offers an idea of architecture that is capable of transcending conventional forms and shapes, but still anchors them in the most common notions of a public space that overcomes urban scale and regional realm.

Both the Fun Palace and Generator, by embedding time in the multilateral nature of the edifice, open up the potential for continuing architectural change and evolution in response to context and user input. Japan Net elaborates the same set of conceptual concerns, albeit in a

different and arguably more convincing way. The structure of the design scheme is substantively enforced with communicational and informational infrastructures. By blending the virtual and physical, especially in the case of the Intelligent Plaza, coupled with the use of animation software, architecture becomes the embodiment of the city and its future development. The Intelligent Plaza integrates Viewing Platforms with digital imagery, and the language of “porous skin” (Fig. 24).

The importance of Japan Net extends beyond the impracticalities of the design proposal and the intellectual sophistication of the cybernetic model. It fully engages the consequences of volatile economic conditions and the shifting realities of the productive base of the city, above all the changing nature of work and the consequent changes in the constitution of urban relations. Japan Net, as architecture and program, changes itself in response to the different currents, evolves with time, and retains its resilience. More importantly, it reads the city not as a given, but as a constantly rearranging and mutating entity, to which architecture should react by continuous, evolutionary change.

In the case of Japan Net, one can speak more in terms of an architectural network that is a result of the mutual consensus of different individual and collective identities. In that sense architecture is sanctioned by the community and represents that community. Above all, Japan Net stands as an example of the specific architecture which exploits power of communication networks in order to exhort effects of the urban acupuncture, stimulating public use of space.

This chapter has analyzed Japan Net in relationship to the context of the competition. The project resulted in the development of cybernetics model, understood as a system which evolves and also provides a space for direct human interactions. Japan Net is architecture which utilizes the potentials of communication networks, but also fosters human encounters. This
chapter has also shown that the application of cybernetic theory can lead to an architectural system which blends itself with the city through its interactions with it.

Figure 29 Selection of Drawings for Japan net. Source: Cedric Price- Opera, ed. Samantha Hardingham, (London: Academy Press, 2003), 16.
The competition entry envisioned that “a grid would be spread throughout the area independently of the topography of land that would be encountered. If a grid nodes fell on an existing building, the building would assimilate the node; in the case of sea water or a hill with trees, a boat or a distinct foundation type would be applied.” (In Furtado (2007), 299.)

The Japan Net Project stands in the tide of informational development. Gonçalo Furtado writes: “Towards the 1980s, there was an explosion of computation opened up by microprocessors.” (In Furtado (2007), 276.) Pask saw the potential in an “optimistic future of cooperative interdependence between human beings and computers that could lead to mutual evolution.” (In Furtado (2007), 276.).

Additional Note: “Fig. 2. One interpretation would place perceptual flow around one ring of torus, communication (or information) flow around larger ring. Another, which is more apposite on the current assumption that communication capacity and the capacity for information flow are essentially unlimited (4 fibre optic channels, 4 coaxial channels, 12 phone lines, all independent to each apartment, limitless inexpensive RAM and limitless Compact Optical Disc ROM storage) is to see torus immersed in information space, the small ring flux as perceptual (for examples, by adjusting partitions) and the large ring flux as geographical proximity control (for example, by drawbridges between balconies, given unlimited freedom and facility of vertical access and horizontal main access underground, i.e. for motor car parking and for container vehicles). A more detailed interpretation (compatible with the relatively simple construction advanced by Heinz Von Foerster). … a structure of the kind suggested as that which is suspended in the plaza of Dr. 1.a, by the composition of tensegrities. This initially, represents the design of Kawasaki, the habitation taking place in the exemplars of this be augmented by ‘artist impression’ sketches which will constitute Dr. 19 onwards. In any case, the ‘a”’ series of drawings, Dr. 1.a to Dr. 27.a. develop, explicitly, the conceptual elements of thought and design and give them tangible, constructible, form, Animation and, as the city is inhabited, evolution, is assumed.” (Note, In Kawasaki Folio, C.P.A., C.C.A., DR2004-0470.)
Chapter 8. Conclusion

When we asked Cedric Price if we could consider presenting POTTERIES THINKBELT at ... a Supercrit in 2003 he asked one question: ‘what is the value of it now – what is useful about it now, for you’ [emphasis added].

Historically and theoretically, socially affirmative action through architecture has always been a challenge. The greatly discredited social promises of the modern movement polarized architectural discourse into those who uncritically embraced the context and those who, out of a belief in architecture’s inability to induce any kind of significant social impact, resorted to the realm of architectural form. However, Cedric Price, by postulating architecture as a utopian manifestation, not only designed an architecture of the utopian process, but promoted an idea of architecture which embeds that same process. Understood in those terms, architecture became a tool in a more broadly conceived agenda.

Price’s work affirms program and comprehends it not as a “noun,” but as a “verb;” “to do architecture” meant for Price to program architecture. Through his designs, Price utilized a set of computational procedures, and implemented program as an interface, a memory device, and an “evolutionary” diagram. In other words, program interacts with the user, “learns” from that experience, and evolves with time and context. Practiced as such, program would become a vehicle of agency. Program operates as a form-generating tool, an eminently architectural concept. Through interaction with the user, the building simultaneously blends with and

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246 Rem Koolhaas, “Goodbye to Hollywood” (Content, Koeln: Taschen, 2003), 118.


248 In the words of John Frazer, “It is further recommended that the concept is process-driven; that is, by form-generating rules which consist not of components, but of processes.” (in John Frazer. “A Natural
distinguishes itself from the broader environment. To a certain extent, the “building” develops its own subjectivity. Informational exchange with the user makes the building a subject of knowledge, forming and transforming itself and realizing its effect, role, and scope.\textsuperscript{249} Price’s architecture, ethically motivated, is a system which by embracing computation and exploiting communication networks, fosters direct human encounters, eventually increasing users’ agency.

Price utilized program to overcome the mechanisms that are inherent to architecture as a system of social control. Price’s architecture is an appropriation of the politics of space through a formal vocabulary of architecture \textit{qua} program. As his pursuits of the notions of “free space” progressed, they utilized a set of tools which enabled program and architecture to be perceived as an organism. Postulated as such, program overcomes the limitations of the conventional brief, enabling the user to define and initiate the use of space. Through the three case studies consulted, this idea was traced from its initial inception in the Fun Palace to its logical extensions in Generator and Japan Net, which marked the important shift from the level of the architectural object to the level of the city. Together, these three precedents delineate a theoretical framework for increasing users’ agency through program, while maintaining the imperative for architecture to provide a visually memorable framework for public interaction. Price sought to overcome control mechanisms in space by understanding architecture as a topological system, a system that preserves its fundamental attributes through temporal and spatial change.

Price’s work offers fertile ground for considering methods for social action and suggests possibilities for practicing architecture in a more socially committed manner. Price’s work does

\textsuperscript{249} Unfortunately, the particular procedures and applied techniques compromised the proclaimed ends, eventually promoting culture of control.

not limit itself to a social critique, but it provides a distinctively other utopian image of the future, which is illustrative of ideas that by far exceed architectural practice, and essentially address issues of wider political relevance. Within this framework critically understanding physical and social contexts is neither a predicament nor an impediment; it becomes an opportunity which eventually increases the architect’s agency as well. In other words,

This will result in significant technological advances in our ability to intervene in the environment. Not a static picture of being, but a dynamic picture of becoming and unfolding—a direct analogy with a description of the natural world [emphasis added].

Most of Price’s disciplinary agenda was informed by the discourse of the sixties, predominantly marked by an emerging new architectural sensibility, as a reaction to “pure architecture [that] was descriptive (a taxonomy of buildings and methods) and prescriptive (as in the preparation of plans) but it did little to predict and explain.” On the other hand, the work of Price offers a new model of architectural practice that is capable of exploiting the emerging condition of urbanity and which in return offers a significant potential for rethinking architecture and promoting free space:

Systems, notably cities, grow and develop and, in general evolve. Clearly, this concept is contingent upon the functionalist/mutalist hypothesis (without which it is difficult to see in what sense the system itself does grow) though the dependency is often unstated. An immediate practical consequence of the evolutionary point of view is that architectural designs should have rules for evolution built into them if their growth is to be healthy rather than cancerous. In their words, a responsible architect must be concerned with

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evolutionary properties; he cannot merely stand back and observe evolution as something that happens to his structures.\textsuperscript{253} This condition of generic anonymity is a realm of great potential yet to be exploited in order to develop uninhibited human action in space. Out of that, architecture emerges as a communal and communally mediated space, as the Japan Net case study has shown. Price’s model; of practice remains an ethically viable and socially responsible one in line with an idea of the city that does not succumb to the false poignancy of historical “memory.” The contemporary city, as a prime plane of architecture’s identity, is a space without distinct boundaries, clearly defined centers, or peripheries. Price’s architecture seems to offer a compelling response to these conditions.\textsuperscript{254} Beyond the static notions of conventional architectural space, Price’s work responds to the “diverse activities and shifting desires”\textsuperscript{255} in dialogue with the city that evolves, mutates, and rearranges itself constantly.

Price’s oeuvre bears the stamp of a radically different approach to architecture. He remained devoted to the well-being of the individual as the most sensible path to social betterment. Whether and to what extent his architecture would have delivered the promise of social advancement is at this point of lesser importance. His work provided a map of potential and possible shortcomings of constituting architecture as a predominantly social activist practice.\textsuperscript{256} Between the architectural act and the utopian impulse, between program,

\textsuperscript{253} Gordon Pask. “The Architectural Relevance of Cybernetics,” in \textit{Cyber Reader: Critical writings for the digital era}, ed. by Neil Spiller (London, New York: Phaidon, 2002), 80. Originally published in \textit{Architectural Design}, 1969.\textsuperscript{254} On other hand, it doesn’t acknowledge the necessity of points of stability in the construction of the human identity.\textsuperscript{255} Gonçalo Furtado, \textit{Generator and Beyond- Encounters of Cedric Price and John Frazer}, (Castelo Viegas, Coimbra: Semear Palavras, 2008), 38.\textsuperscript{256} It is certainly early to assess the work of Cedric Price in terms of wider disciplinary importance. Doing so would be limited, taking into account the significant research potential his work offers in general. Judging from the current condition of scholarship, two projects in particular the \textit{Interaction Center} and \textit{Magnet}, seem unduly neglected. A number of other projects, \textit{Snake} for instance, haven’t received much research attention either. Furthermore, the Kawasaki Competition seems to lack the extensive coverage.
computation and environment, Price’s work speaks for an architecture that is ethically oriented and human-centered. Above all it speaks of a necessity of understanding architecture as political intentionality, which “contains...[human] creativity and social interaction.”

Additionally, a short, unfinished film was made for Fun Palace. The Cedric Price Archive at the Canadian Center for Architecture stores both film and screenplay. A study dealing with representational narratives in the work of Cedric Price is still lacking.


Archival research was conducted at the Canadian Center for Architecture, Cedric Price Archive, in Montreal (Quebec, Canada) in the period between December 12, 2011, and December 22, 2011. Initial incentive for the visit was motivated by the question of how far the Fun Palace as a project went in the design development stage, and whether there are overlooked additional visual materials. One can claim that the Fun Palace probably came closest of any project of that time to the ideals of the responsive architecture (as per Anthony Vidler), though many facets of the project remained significantly unaddressed by the design team. The current scholarship has extensively covered the Fun Palace. However, the document on the Biological Models, pointing out the Fun Palace’s evolving nature, remained overlooked. The Fun Palace Folio contains the document entitled “Fun Palace Project Report” which is indicative of the design intent and the conceptual procedure of the entire endeavor. The initial selection of the three precedents for this thesis was based on the application of technology to architectural thinking, with an overall aim to trace that development through several decades of Price’s carrier. In that sense, consulting materials in Generator Folio pointed out several papers written by John Frazer et al (“Intelligent physical Three-dimensional Modeling Systems” and “A Conceptual Seeing Technique for Architectural Design”), which placed Price’s work in the context of others who also aimed to achieve architecture as a responsive system. In the case of the Generator project it provided better understanding of the specific procedures—programs 1, 2, 3, and 4—which facilitated the concepts of “boredom” and “perpetual architect.” It also gave an insight on the initial stages of the Generator project and the ways questionnaires were used to determine start use and functions of the compound. The third precedent, Japan Net, was given little or no attention in the published scholarship on Price’s work, except for the short entry in the book by Samantha Hardingham. Gonçalo Furtado gave a significant contribution to initial understanding of the project. Closer reading of the competition boards, competition brief and explanatory text by Cedric Price and Gordon Pask provided me a comprehensive understanding of the project and lead me to think of the three precedents not only in terms advancement in the application of the technology, but as a progression of the architectural intervention which is not only grounded in technology, but moves from the level of the insular architectural object to the level of the city. Consulting the archival material in the Japan Net Folio shed a new light on the role of Gordon Pask, and the importance on the ideas he promoted in the paper “The Limits of Togetherness” for the overall structure and character of this scheme. Through the comparative analysis of the projects, the development of the notions of program in Price’s work was traced, but it also provided an insight on the effect of communication networks and computational techniques can have on architecture, its character and its task of providing a dignified framework for social interaction.

**Fun Palace Folio**

Generator Folio


Kawasaki Folio


